

DINGXIN ZHAO

The CONFUCIAN-LEGALIST STATE

*A New Theory
of Chinese History*



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A New Theory of Chinese History
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Preface

It was more than forty years ago, in 1974, that I first became interested in the topics I write about in this book, when I was a member of a writing group organized by the propaganda cadre of my factory in Yinchuan, Ningxia.¹ The writing group had assembled in a grassroots affirmation of the government-initiated “Criticize Lin [Biao], Criticize Confucius” campaign, which was gaining momentum in early 1974. Lin was a celebrated military commander and an ardent supporter of the radical Maoism that had led to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. In 1969, he became Mao’s heir apparent. But during the ensuing power struggle within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), he soon fell out of Mao’s favor. Yet instead of bowing to Mao as all the other out-of-favor CCP veterans had done, Lin Biao defied him. He tried to flee to the Soviet Union on September 13, 1971, but was killed when his plane crashed in Mongolia. The “Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius” campaign began in 1973, when Mao discovered in Lin’s private writings a very positive view of Confucianism. Beginning with the May 4 Movement in 1919 more and more educated Chinese had come to consider Confucianism as the source of China’s “backwardness” and weakness. Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, was a principal champion of the “Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius” campaign, hoping to use it to undermine Premier Zhou Enlai, whose more moderate views had gained influence in the CCP after Lin’s death.

During the campaign, the CCP mobilized many hack historians to write essays presenting a highly vulgarized version of the theory of historical materialism, which saw class struggle as the engine of history and the alleged conflict between Confucians and Legalists as a major embodiment of the class struggle in Chinese history. In those essays, Confucius and Confucianism were to be vilified, and Lin Biao and his followers were to be portrayed as contemporary incarnations of evil

1. I left Shanghai for Yinchuan in 1969 during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and worked in a machine tool factory between 1970 and 1978. Yinchuan is the capital city of Ningxia, a Hui (Muslim) autonomous region in the northwestern part of China.

Confucians. The task of our writing group was quite simple: to produce dogmatic essays criticizing Lin Biao and his alleged local followers and linking Lin's "treason" to the pernicious legacy of Confucianism. Being young and ardent, I wanted to believe the CCP propagandists and hack historians. I also had a genuine wish to understand Chinese history and to write serious essays exposing the vices of the past and present. For me, joining the group meant serious reading and thinking.

The Chinese of my generation grew up in an intellectually unhealthy environment. Before joining the writing group, I had never read any ancient Chinese philosophical text in the original or any serious writings by historians. Joining the writing group gave me a chance to read some of the ancient Chinese texts written by or credited to Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi, Xunzi, Guanxi, and Hanfeizi and to read famous essays such as "On Salt and Iron," compiled by a Western Han dynasty scholar, and "On Feudalism," by Liu Zongyuan, a famous Tang dynasty (618–907) politician and essayist. This was also the first time I read with any depth books by leading Chinese Marxist historians such as Guo Moruo, Fan Wenlan, and Ren Jiyu. My understanding of their works was superficial at that time. I had only a primary school education, which allowed me only a limited grasp of these writings and the historical contexts that produced them. Still, I could see that ancient Chinese philosophies were highly eclectic and that dividing premodern Chinese thinkers and politicians into Legalists and Confucians was absurd. It was also not hard for me to see that the history of ancient China was not about the struggles between Legalists and Confucians.

My doubts scared me. Independent thinking was dangerous in Maoist China. In 1970 three youths in Yinchuan received death sentences merely for having organized a study group on Marxism and for expressing critical views of contemporary politics. In my own factory, a record was added in a fellow worker's dossier that he committed a "serious offense" because he said in a study session that what Liu Shaoqi had written in his booklet *On the Self-Cultivation of Communist Party Members* was only straight talk.² Silence was my safest path. While I was in the writing group, I was unable to produce a sentence. I could feel the propaganda cadre's disappointment with my lack of productivity. I also felt particularly inept in comparison with my friend a fellow group member who had published many articles in regional and national newspapers and magazines and thus gained a degree of fame while still very young.³ Nevertheless, my experience in the writing group was invaluable. It not only gave me a chance to read those Chinese classics that I would otherwise never have had the chance to see, but also greatly deepened my interest in Chinese history, especially the history of

2. Liu (1951). Liu was the president of China before his death, but was purged by Mao during the Cultural Revolution. He died in 1969.

3. After Mao died and Mao's wife and her radical colleagues were jailed, my friend was held responsible for the relentless personal attacks in his writings and was barred for many years from undertaking graduate studies.

the Spring and Autumn and Warring and States eras, between 770 and 221 BCE, the time when major Chinese philosophies were taking shape. Some questions raised in this book had their origins at this stage of my life, but old questions were reshaped or rejected and many new questions were developed as I learned more.

Not long after Mao's death in 1976, China began to reject Maoist radicalism. Chinese universities resumed normal admission policies, and I fortunately passed the entrance examination and entered Fudan University in early 1978. Although I was admitted into Fudan as a biology major, I maintained my interest in politics and history and continued to read widely. Among various books that I read before the mid-1980s, *Prosperity and Crisis: On the Ultra-Stable Equilibrium Structure of Chinese Feudal Society*, by Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng, particularly caught my attention.⁴ The book argues that successive imperial states of China (the authors' "feudal state") faced the problems of overexpanding bureaucracy, rising despotism and corruption, concentration of land ownership, and the growing power of tyrannical local officials. The development of these "unorganized forces" brought down each of the Chinese dynasties. At the same time, Chinese society was continuously dominated by Confucian literati (*shi*). They played a key role in the establishment and daily functioning of the dynasty, and their dominance made each new dynasty a virtual carbon copy of the previous one, resulting in the formation of the "ultra-stable equilibrium structure" in pre-modern China. According to Jin and Liu, this not only perpetuated Chinese despotism, but also precluded any chance for China to have a genuine breakthrough to industrial capitalism.

When I judge them by my present academic standards, I can see Jin and Liu's argument and scholarship are seriously problematic. But that was not my opinion at the time. Their book was published in the early 1980s when the highly vulgarized version of the theory of historical materialism propagated by Mao's government and historians was still inordinately influential, and we had no chance to read relevant works written by more recent Western scholars. The book was enlightening and deserved the impact it had on educated Chinese of my age. Thanks to this book I rethought more keenly many questions that had occurred to me when I was working in the factory. I began to read history books, and with a more focused interest. I began looking into Arnold Toynbee, Karl Wittfogel, and John Fairbank. I even read Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* before moving to Canada in 1986 to pursue a PhD in entomology.

In 1990 I transferred to McGill University's sociology PhD program. My only reason was the military crackdown on the 1989 Beijing Student Movement, which I saw as one of the greatest political tragedies of twentieth-century China. I wanted to study and write about it, with the hope that a better understanding

4. Jin and Liu (1988).

of the event could help avoid similar tragedies in the future. But I retained my interest in the patterns of the Chinese past.

At this point I must mention with gratitude the two McGill professors who influenced me most in this regard. One was Professor Donald von Eschen. In his two-semester course on social change, Don introduced me to the works of Barrington Moore, Eric Wolf, Perry Anderson, Immanuel Wallerstein, and many other great scholars. He also spent an enormous amount of time with me, pushing me to read more and to shed biases inherited from my previous life as a natural scientist. Don is a great scholar and a dedicated teacher. His mentoring has been invaluable. Another was Professor John Hall, whose class, "Sociology of the State," was an eye-opener. His recently published book, *Power and Liberty*, which we read in class, is a classic analysis of the reasons industrial capitalism developed in Western Europe but not in the other parts of Eurasia. It also enlightened me regarding the crucial importance of the relationship between political and ideological power. After I had read many cutting-edge works of historical sociology that John had asked me to read inside and outside of the class, he introduced me to the writings of Charles Tilly and Michael Mann. Their scholarship set a new standard that I immediately aspired to meet. Only after taking John's class was my general interest in the patterns of the China's past transformed into a realistic research project. I will always be thankful for John's guidance and friendship.

This work would not have been possible without the support of many scholars, friends, and institutions. Timothy Brook, Cho-yun Hsu, Ho-fung Hung, Michael Nylan, Michael Puett, Edward Shaughnessy, and Anthony Yu read all or part of the manuscript and provided valuable critiques and suggestions; I am greatly indebted to them all. Special thanks are due to Michael Nylan, who read the entire manuscript punctiliously and sent me over thirty single-spaced pages of comments, which besides strengthening my arguments also saved me from many embarrassing errors.

Colleagues at the University of Chicago and many other fellow sociologists and political scientists read the manuscript entirely or in part or discussed the topics at length with me. They are Andrew Abbott, Samuel Clark, Thomas Ertman, Peter Evans, Jack Goldstone, John A. Hall, Edgar Kiser, Edward Laumann, George Lawson, Donald Levine, Michael Mann, John Levi Martin, Doug McAdam, William Parish, Walter Scheidel, the late Charles Tilly, and Andrew Walder. They provided countless insightful suggestions, which I will always value, along with their generosity and friendship.

I should also like to thank the participants in the History of the Chinese State conference, held in Paris on October 7, 2010: in particular, Jean-Philippe Beja, Michel Bonnin, Frederic Wang, and Pierre-Etienne Will, all of whom read my manuscript and offered critical and constructive comments and suggestions that helped me with another round of revisions.

Yantang Chen, Zhenhao Song, Mingqin Wang, and Lidong Zhang, among many other Chinese archaeologists, helped me during my field research. I am grateful for their kindness.

My students Jean Lin, Yanfei Sun, Geng Tian, Liping Wang, and Yang Zhang read the entire manuscript or parts thereof and gave me much useful feedback. My students Fen Lin, Ruixi Mao, and Xing Zhong assisted my research. I am very proud and truly honored to have them all as my current or former students.

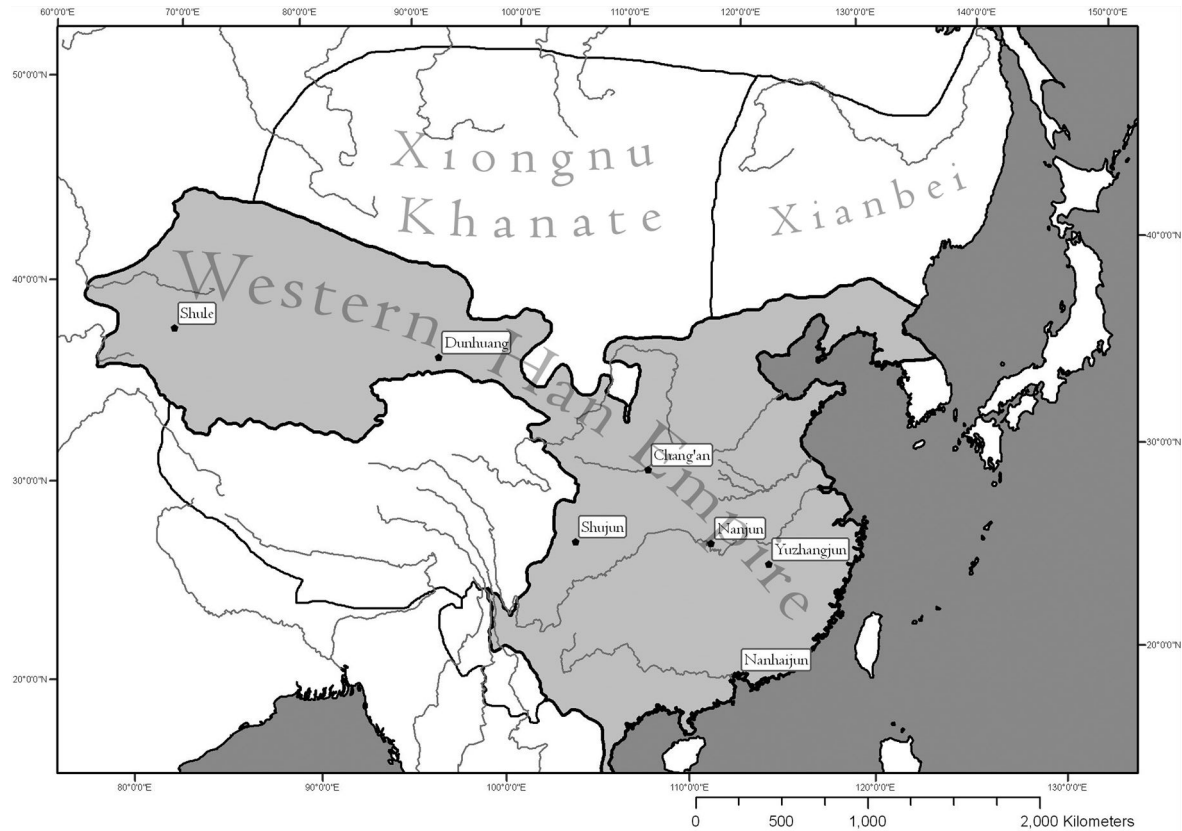
Various parts of this book have been presented in workshops, seminars, and conferences held at University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, Harvard University, Stanford University, Northwestern University, Columbia University, the University of Michigan, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, University of Toronto, University of Western Ontario, Chinese University of Hong Kong, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica (Taipei), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing), Peking University, Tsinghua University (Beijing), Zhejiang University, Renmin University, Fudan University, Shanghai University, Zhongshan University, Xiamen University, and Wuhan University. Comments and suggestions by the participants in these events helped to tighten many loose ends. I should like to express my appreciation for them here.

I thank Naomi Noble Richard for her superb editorship and insightful comments on the manuscript. This book would not have taken its current shape without her help. Thanks are also due to Samuel Brown at the Joseph Regenstein Library, the University of Chicago, who assisted me in producing all the maps and figures of the book.

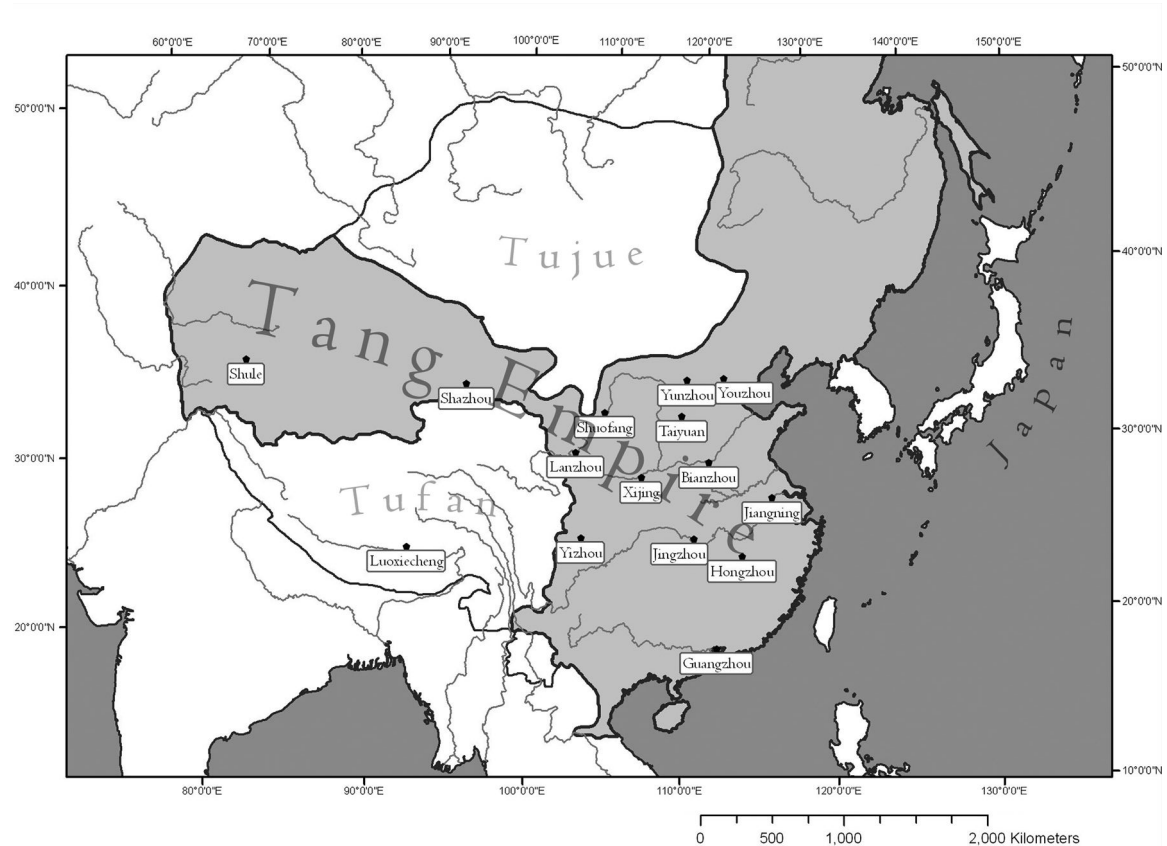
My research was supported by the University of Chicago's J. David Greenstone Memorial Fund and the China Committee's Faculty Research Grants. The Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange provided funding for a sabbatical in 2006–2007, which allowed me to finish a large part of this book. I completed the first draft of the book at Stanford University's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences during the 2009–2010 academic year. While I was at the Center, Robert Scott and Pekker Hamalainen gave me many suggestions. I note with gratitude all the institutional and personal support that I received during my year at the Center.

Last but very far from least is my heartfelt appreciation for Yiqun Zhou. She has supported this project for many years. She read each chapter of this manuscript many times and made countless insightful comments and criticisms. This book could never have reached its current shape without her help. I can only acknowledge, most humbly, her wide range of knowledge, great intuition, logical mind, and the profound modesty with which she assisted me in this project. I dedicate this book to her.

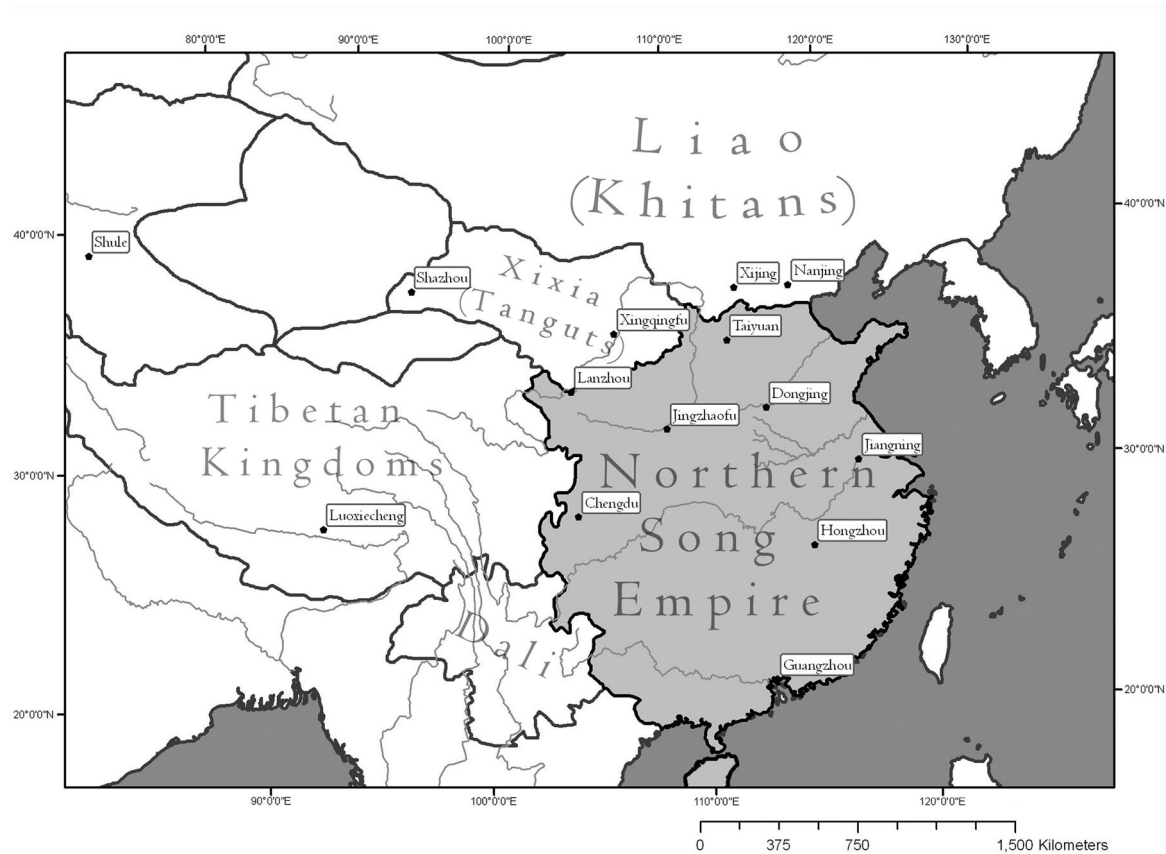
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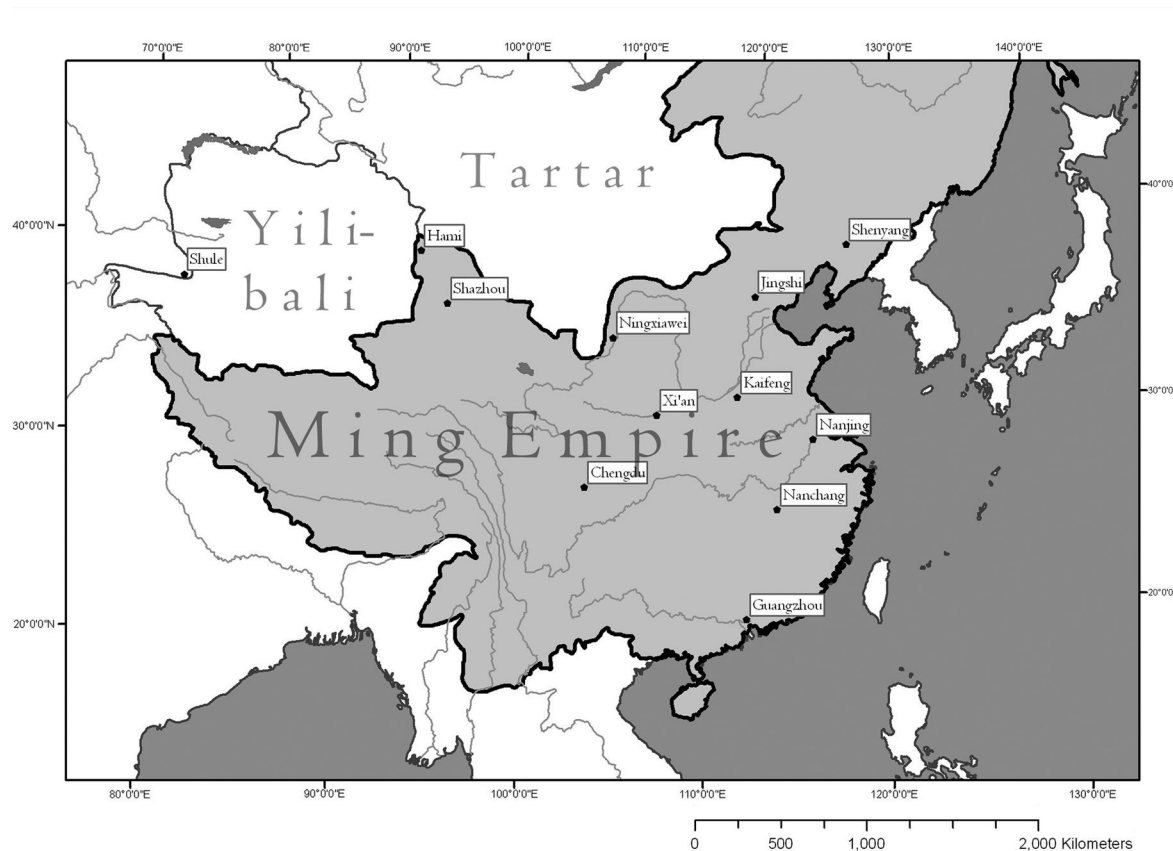
MAP 1. Map of Late Western Han Empire, circa 50 BCE



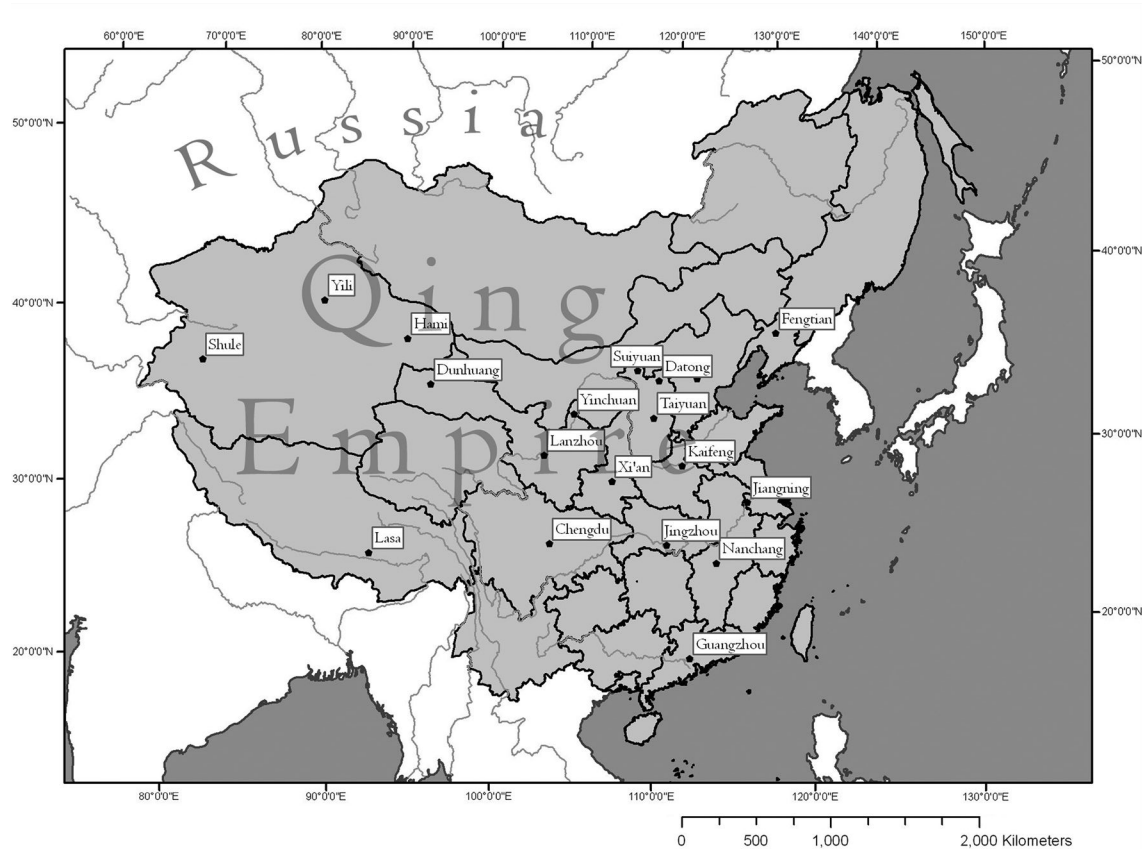
MAP 2. Map of Tang Empire, circa 741 CE



MAP 3. Map of Northern Song Empire, circa 1111 CE



MAP 4. Map of Ming Empire, circa 1433 CE



MAP 5. Map of Qing Empire, circa 1820 CE

PART I

Empirical and Theoretical Considerations

Introduction

This book is intended as a sociological analysis of the patterns of China's history. I use the term "China" as a shorthand reference to an area, varying in size over time, where Chinese characters served as the predominant form of written communication and where the inhabitants showed a certain commitment to a changing but identifiable cultural complex that is now regarded as Chinese civilization. The book is divided into four parts. Part I consists of the introduction and a chapter on theory. The two chapters that make up Part II (chapters 2 and 3) explicate the political, social, intellectual, and economic background of the Western Zhou period (ca. 1045–771 BCE), centuries that were formative in Chinese civilization. The geographic and climatic conditions of the Western Zhou period are also discussed. Part III (chapters 4–8) is the core of the book, covering the history of China from the Spring and Autumn and Warring States eras (770–221 BCE) to the early part of the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE).¹ Since the Spring and Autumn and Warring States eras roughly correspond to the Eastern Zhou era (770–249 BCE), a time when the Zhou Dynasty experienced decreasing power and influence and was eventually wholly conquered by Qin, this era will be referred to as the East Zhou period hereafter. Chapters of Part III examine the forces that spurred, or at least enabled, the emergence in this era of Chinese philosophies, market relations, and bureaucratic empires, as well as China's unification by Qin and the inception of the Confucian-Legalist state during the Western Han dynasty.

Following Tilly, this book defines "states" as "coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories."² The term "empire" is used more restrictively—that is, to denote a type of premodern

1. The Spring and Autumn and the subsequent Warring States periods ended when the First Emperor of Qin (r. 246–210 BCE) conquered all the remaining independent states of Eastern Zhou and created a unified empire in 221 BCE. Scholars, however, disagree about the Spring and Autumn's starting date. Some date it to 722 BCE, which is the date when *The Spring and Autumn Annals* begins (discussed later in the chapter). This author, as most others do, dates it from 770 BCE because in that year King Ping of Zhou (r. 770–720 BCE), under military pressure from the pastoral tribes and states, was forced to relocate his capital eastward to present-day Luoyang, an event that signaled the end of Western Zhou.

2. Tilly (1992, p. 1).

agrarian state that controlled multiple urban centers and extensive hinterlands, significantly adapted its methods of rule to peoples of different ethnic origins, and, due to its limited premodern infrastructural capacity, exercised only indirect rule over local communities and frontier areas.³

The Confucian-Legalist political system that emerged in China during the Western Han lasted for two millennia. By no means does “lasted” imply that this political system underwent no significant changes over that time. Rather, certain features of the system continued to appeal to the rulers and elites and the system itself was sufficiently flexible that the rulers and elites of the Chinese dynasties that came after the Han could amend it without discarding it. Yet, it was precisely because of this resilience that China, for better or worse, did not develop industrial capitalism as Western Europe did,⁴ notwithstanding China’s economic prosperity and technological sophistication beginning with the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). Since the persistence of the Confucian-Legalist political system and the possibility nevertheless of a Chinese development of industrial capitalism have been written about extensively by scholars in several disciplines, I decided to discuss instead, as an extended conclusion in the four brief chapters of Part IV (chapters 10–13), how the Confucian-Legalist state set the pattern for Chinese history in the light of the theoretical framework developed in this book.

In writing this book, I also aim to develop a theory of historical change by adding *competition/conflict* logics to Michael Mann’s version of Weberian theory,⁵ seeking to formulate a new kind of sociological inquiry by unifying structural analysis and mechanism-based explanations, and incorporating historical temporality as a key component in the book’s narrative, interpretations, and explanations.

3. For a more systematic discussion of various usages of the concept, see Steinmetz (2006, pp. 141–49).

4. Hereafter, Western Europe will be referred to simply as “Europe” unless otherwise specified. Western Europe in this book refers to a landmass stretching from the Mediterranean to Scandinavia, where Catholicism emerged as the predominant religion after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, and where such world-historical events as the Renaissance, Reformation, scientific revolution, Enlightenment, French Revolution, rise of nation-states, and Industrial Revolution took place. Except when absolutely necessary, I shall not specify countries when comparing China and Europe. For instance, when addressing the question of why an indigenous development of industrial capitalism was impossible in the China of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I compare China with Europe rather than England, even though the Industrial Revolution began in England. I reasoned thusly: the politics and economics of early modern Europe were highly competitive and interlocked, and the Industrial Revolution is a world-historical event that cannot be completely isolated from other European developments, such as the Renaissance, Reformation, scientific revolution, and rise of nation-states. From the perspective of China, the Industrial Revolution is not an English phenomenon but a European one.

5. Like most conflict theorists, I see competition as the source of social conflict. Yet, to clearly distinguish between the concepts of competition and conflict can be difficult in real-life situations because, among other reasons, the value(s) one holds can determine whether one perceives a situation as a competition or a conflict. A situation that a conservative sees as the result of fair competition will often be regarded by a radical as the result of conflict between two actors with different endowments of resources. Even a fair competition can be viewed as unfair by the losing side, which may trigger conflict.

This is a book of both history and sociology. It is history because it analyzes past happenings, and thus takes historical contexts and questions of temporality seriously. Bowing to the current dominant beliefs that history is nonteleological, nondirectional, and contingent, historians today tend to focus on brief time periods and specific aspects of history. In analyzing historical dynamics, they also tend to privilege the social forces or factors that are close to their areas of interest (e.g., most economic historians tend to analyze a society's potential for economic development by examining economic and demographic factors, and military historians tend to see war as the most important engine of social change).⁶ This book studies overarching patterns of China's past, and tries to show that, although history is nonteleological and significantly contingent, it is also directional and patterned. Moreover, artificially separating the interrelated political, military, ideological, and economic forces operating in a society, as most historians currently do, has prevented us from accumulating historical wisdom even at a time when our knowledge of the past keeps increasing. This book aims at a synthesis, at showing how the patterns of Chinese history were shaped, not by any single force, but instead by all the meaningful activities of a given period's social actors, however constrained they may have been by the society's constellation of political, economic, military, and ideological forces, and however how much they modified any or all of those forces.

This book is a work of sociology because it emphasizes the great importance of structural forces and social mechanisms in shaping historical dynamics. Most studies in comparative historical sociology begin with one or several empirical questions and then identify one or a few variables or mechanisms for answering them. The changing importance and configurations of social mechanisms resulting from changing macrostructural conditions, and the role of humans' meaning-driven activities within them, are not the focus of those studies. I try instead to raise many questions on many aspects and times of China's history, including questions related to that history's macro and temporal patterns, and I try to posit answers to those questions using a single theory that is flexible enough to incorporate history's context-specific causality and contingent temporality.⁷

This approach is not meant to denigrate conventional scholarship and its continuing contribution to both history and sociology as academic disciplines. In this age of deconstruction and fragmentation, I can only beg readers to be receptive to the holistic/dialectic, macrohistorical analysis employed in the book. I also hope readers will absorb a central epistemological criterion, of ancient Greek origin,

6. Chapter 13 of this book can be read as an empirical critique of works by economic historians.

7. My colleague Andrew Abbott (2001) has discussed with great insight the many methodological difficulties faced by historical sociologists. The methodology and narrative style adopted in this book can be seen as an effort to deal with some of the problems Abbott raises.

regarding knowledge: that a theory should contain as little explanatory apparatus as possible and yet be able to explain as much as possible.

Here, I first enumerate the major research questions that I try to answer and the historical patterns that I try to explain. Then, I briefly explore some of the most important questions, using the theoretical apparatus that I discuss in chapter 1. The introduction ends with two sections on research methodology and the epistemological principles that the book adopts, both of which may be skipped by readers who are more focused on other topics.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although this book aims to explore numerous research questions, it has just two principal purposes. The first is to explain how and why China was unified and developed into a bureaucratic empire under the state of Qin.⁸ The second is to address how it was that, until the nineteenth century, the political-cultural structure of China that was institutionalized during the Western Han era showed such resilience, despite great changes in demography, socioeconomic structure, ethnic composition, market relations, religious landscapes, technology, topography, and other aspects such as those brought by rebellions or nomadic conquests.⁹ Let me now turn to the substantive questions. My story starts with the Eastern Zhou period, the formative age of Chinese civilization.

During the Eastern Zhou period, China experienced several major, lasting transformations.¹⁰ Politically, governance developed from over a hundred small, lineage-based city-states to a merit-based bureaucratic agrarian empire (or empires) with extensive territories.¹¹ In the ideological realm, China's major

8. Some of my historian friends are critical of the kind of rhetorical structure I use in this sentence (referring to the "Qin conquest of China" is another example). My defense is that, for the sake of concision, it is sometimes necessary to resort to reification and metonymy—reification because we sometimes need to "impute a unitary interest, rational capacity, and joint action to a state, a ruling class, or the people subject to their joint control," and metonymy in that it is sometimes necessary to speak of "rulers" or "elites" as if these concepts represent a fixed agent or "entire decision-making apparatus, thus reducing to a single point a complex, contingent set of social relations" (Tilly 1992, p. 34). As Tilly argues, "Without a simplified model employing metonymy and reification, we have no hope of identifying the main connections in the complex process of European state formation" (*ibid.*). His argument also applies to the analyses in this book.

9. Pines (2012), addressing the same question, adopts a political-cultural approach. He argues that what made the Chinese empire "everlasting" was the persistence and development of "specific principles concerning the empire's maintenance—the concept of political unity, the idea of monarchism, behavioral norms for politically involved intellectuals, and rules for dealing with local elites and with the commoners." This book is not meant to challenge Pines's thesis. Rather, it is a sociological analysis of how the Confucian-Legalist political culture emerged and strengthened over time as a result of the interplay between political and ideological power and actors.

10. The following summary of the nature and scale of the Eastern Zhou historical transition is widely accepted (Lewis 1990, p. 5).

11. During the Western Zhou and the early Eastern Zhou periods, lineage was basic to the socioeconomic, political, and military organization of society. A Chinese "lineage" can be defined as a patrilineal kinship group whose members are descended from a known ancestor through a series of traceable links. A larger descent category, comprising people "who believe they are descended from a common ancestor but do not know the actual connections[,] is defined as a clan" (Falkenhausen 2006, p. 23).

philosophies, later denominated Confucianism, Legalism, and Daoism started to take shape.¹² In the military realm, China produced massive standing armies, new weapons, and sophisticated military strategies and military writings. In the economic realm, large-scale long-distance trade became commonplace; large metropolitan centers emerged; and money was in wide use. To some scholars these impressive developments reveal parallels between Eastern Zhou China and Europe during the second millennium.¹³ The similarities, however, are quite superficial. Europe retained a multistate system, achieved constitutional governments, and developed industrial capitalism. None of these things happened in Eastern Zhou China. Instead, in the later part of the Eastern Zhou period, Legalistic thinking became the prevailing state ideology, the military was increasingly under the control of the state, and merchants were unable to convert their wealth into autonomous political power. In other words, although Eastern Zhou China experienced new developments in almost all spheres, it was political power that triumphed in the end, leading to the rise of bureaucratic agrarian empires with large standing armies, a phenomenon that historian Ray Huang referred to as a “precocious political maturation.”¹⁴ Why did China’s politics, ideology, military, and economy develop at such an unusually fast pace during the Eastern Zhou era? Why was state power increasingly dominant during the late Eastern Zhou era, leading to the rise of militarily strong bureaucratic empires?¹⁵ Why (or how) was the Qin empire able to conquer all rival states and unify China? Part III of the book addresses these questions.

The mighty Qin empire, despite having a formidable standing army over a half-million strong, ruled China for only fifteen years. Immediately after the death of the First Emperor in 210 BCE, large-scale rebellions erupted. Out of the war and chaos that followed the collapse of the Qin empire, the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE) emerged triumphant.¹⁶ Less than seventy years after the Han triumph, Confucianism, a broad philosophical tradition that took shape in the late sixth century BCE but had not yet achieved political predominance, was refashioned and promoted as a state ideology. Why was the Qin empire, with its

12. Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism are misleading terms when used to denote the classical learning of Eastern Zhou origin. Their precise meanings and the changes in the meanings over time are discussed in chapters 6, 9, and 12.

13. Hsu (1965); Hui (2005). See also Lewis (1990, p. 6) for a critique of Hsu’s account.

14. Huang (1997, p. 34).

15. Weber (1951, pp. 61–62) was among the earliest to note the parallels between the “administrative rationalization” in Warring States China and early modern Europe.

16. Liu Bang (256–195 BCE), the founder of the Western Han dynasty, adopted the title the King of Han in 206 BCE. The Western Han dynasty was formally established after Liu Bang defeated his archenemy, Xiang Yu, in 202 BCE. In 8 CE, Wang Mang (45 BCE–23 CE) dethroned the last emperor of the Western Han dynasty and established the short-lived Xin dynasty (9–23), which was followed by the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220). Historians therefore sometimes use 202 BCE–8 CE as the dates of the Western Han. Since the exact dates of most historical events are not crucial to the analysis and argument of this book, I will provide no further justifications for most of the dates adopted in the book.

formidable military power, so fragile and short-lived? How did Confucianism achieve the status of dominant state ideology? These questions are the foci of chapter 9.

After China's unification, but particularly during the Western Han dynasty, the following historical patterns, several of them unique to China, gradually emerge: First, China is the only place in the world where a consistent imperial system persisted most of the time for over two millennia between the founding of the Qin dynasty in 221 BCE and the Republican Revolution in 1911. Second, China developed what was arguably the strongest state tradition among the major civilizations. Third, China achieved civilian rule as early as the early Western Han dynasty. Civilian rule was greatly weakened during the Age of Disunion (220–581) and again during the late Tang dynasty, but it achieved new sway during the Northern Song dynasty. Throughout the second millennium CE, except during chaotic dynastic transitions, generals were never able to gain even momentary political dominance of government. In Europe, military commanders tended to wield extraordinary political power even during peacetime; civilian rule was for the most part a modern development. Fourth, whereas most other world empires expanded their territory through military conquest, China expanded in large part through conquest by nomads and semi-nomads, who then largely adopted a Confucian-Legalist mode of governance.¹⁷ Fifth, imperial China was the only world civilization where transcendental world religions exerted no major influence on politics and where a strong state exhibited great tolerance toward, and even actively sponsored, countless kinds of religious beliefs (not just the world religions, but also what scholars have called “popular religion”).¹⁸ Finally, in contrast with early-modern European cities, the cities of late imperial China, even though many of them were highly commercialized, were governed by state-appointed officials, and merchants were never able to carve out an independent role in politics. This book also attempts to explain the origins of these historical patterns; to answer the question of why these patterns emerged and persisted in imperial China despite enormous demographic, environmental, ideological, economic, and other changes; and analyze the dampening effects some of these historical patterns had on the indigenous development of industrial capitalism.

In addition to these macro/temporal questions, this book also addresses numerous meso/micro questions important for understanding patterns of Chinese history. These include: What was the nature of the city-states that

17. Creel (1970, p. 197).

18. Popular religion also thrived in South and Southeast Asia, where non-zero-sum world religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism developed. Yet China was the only place in the world where popular religion was able to develop at the expense of world religions. See chapter 12 for the definition of popular religion and more detailed discussion on the development of popular religion under the Confucian-Legalist state.

emerged during the Western Zhou dynasty? Why were hegemonic interstate relations during the early Eastern Zhou period *not* dominated by a succession of different hegemons, as the conventional wisdom of historians has it? Why did war rituals *not* determine some of the most crucial patterns of Eastern Zhou warfare, given the great importance of rituals in ancient Chinese warfare? Why were Chinese philosophies and philosophers highly eclectic? Why was historical rationalism (i.e., judging the effectiveness of an action by historical precedent and from holistic/dialectic perspectives) a dominant mode of thinking among ancient Chinese philosophers, and what were the consequences of this? Given the fierce and frequent interstate wars during the late Eastern Zhou period, why did nationalistic identities not play a major role in shaping the thinking of ancient China's elite?¹⁹ Why was the state of Chu, dominant during the early Eastern Zhou period, unable to retain that dominance during the latter part of the period? Why was the state of Qi never a superpower during the late Eastern Zhou period, as historians generally believe? What conditions shaped the dynamic relationships between nomadic, nomadic-pastoral, and sedentary peoples and polities? Why did the most powerful nomadic empires of the world all emerge in the north of China and not in other parts of Eurasia, and why were Manchurian semi-nomadic tribes more capable than the fully nomadic peoples of establishing durable empires in China? Why should active participation of the gentry in local affairs during the Southern Song (1127–1279), late Ming, and late Qing dynasties not be understood as the emergence of a nascent “public space,” undermining the Confucian-Legalist state? How could the late imperial Chinese state maintain its rule with reasonable efficiency, having only a relatively small, numerically stable body of bureaucrats even while the Chinese population was undergoing rapid growth? Why was Chinese popular religion able to develop at the expense of institutional religions such as Buddhism and religious Daoism during and after the Song dynasty? Why did the development of unorthodox Confucianism during the late Ming dynasty not lead to a Chinese reformation that would have completely undermined the Neo-Confucian domination of thought and action? Why did the Zunghars fail in their geopolitical competition with the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1911)?

Several of these questions are about temporal/historical variations. I have tried wherever possible to arrange the narrative and analysis chronologically, so as to incorporate the temporal variations of history into the explanation. This is not just to demonstrate a sensitivity to the importance of time and contingency in historical dynamism; it is also to better contextualize all the arguments with historical particularities and thereby avoid making anachronistic arguments.

19. In this book China before the Qin unification in 221 BCE is referred to as “ancient China” or “early China.”

THEORY AND ARGUMENTS

The following summary of the general theory of macro-historical dynamism that guides this book's analysis is brief, to be refined in chapter 1 on theory and in later empirical chapters. The theory of macro-historical dynamism proposed in this book is based on two premises: Humans are competitive and conflict-prone animals who compete individually and collectively for dominance via political, military, ideological, and economic means (Michael Mann refers to these means as the four ideal-typical sources of social power, or *four power sources*).²⁰ From these two premises, we can derive five most important elements of my theory, presented in chapter 1.

First, history is *cumulatively developmental*. By cumulative development, I mean the kind of social change that accelerates humans' capacity to produce and accumulate wealth. It takes place because humans, in order to gain an upper hand in military and economic competition, have to behave instrumentally in order to organize better and produce more efficiently. Moreover, the striving for military and/or economic dominance can also trigger political and ideological development. Second, historical developmental is nonlinear and largely unpredictable, in consequence of the nature of political and ideological power and the competition for these. Competition in the political and ideological spheres, in their ideal-typical forms, does not greatly depend on efficiency-driven material production. When political and ideological competitions dominate a society, the cumulative-development potential of the society will be inhibited. In any given society, the relative importance of political, ideological, military, and economic power and the intensity of the competition in each of these spheres shape the pattern of development. Premodern political and ideological actors generally disliked cumulative development because it always destabilized the political and ideological establishment. A society can become stagnant, or even regressive, depending on which among the four power sources it emphasizes. Third, although both military and economic competition generate cumulative development, military competition tends to advance centralized state power whereas economic competition advances decentralized societal power. Fourth, both military and economic competition facilitates the rise and dominance of instrumental rational thinking and behavior in a society. But military competition facilitates the development of publicly oriented instrumental rationality (i.e., instrumental behavior to advance public goods), whereas economic competition induces the expansion of privately oriented instrumental rationality (i.e., instrumental behavior to achieve private goods by certain individuals or private actors).²¹ Fifth, when social actors achieve

20. Mann (1986, 1993).

21. Privately oriented versus publicly oriented instrumental rationality refers to ideal types. Real-life situations are more complicated. This is especially true of the ancient world, where family was an important organizing unit and the private and public realms were not yet highly differentiated.

dominance, they strive to institutionalize their gains through political control and ideological indoctrination. Different ideologies and their relationship to politics (the state) engender not only different legitimating values for political dominance but also different contexts in which individuals live and social actors compete for significance. The resultant constellations of the four power sources and associated actors add further complexity to the phenomenon of historical development in a society. Based on this theory, I shall now elaborate on the major empirical arguments.

In the late Western Zhou period or the early eighth century BCE, about 150 city-states (dukedom) coexisted in the Yellow and Yangzi River valleys and their vicinities. Most of these states were once subordinate to the Western Zhou court under a feudal arrangement (whose nature is discussed in chapters 2 and 4). Western Zhou's control over these city-states declined after it was compelled to relocate its capital eastward in 770 BCE, in part to escape the pressure of the pastoral tribes that had migrated into China in earlier centuries. With the decline of the Western Zhou dynasty, these city-states were embroiled in constant warfare for over five hundred years. The earlier clashes were mostly minor, largely because the states involved did not yet have standing armies or resources adequate to support a large-scale war, and also because the states' behavior was restrained by the nature of interstate relations at the time. As more and more states were conquered, larger states with standing armies emerged, and as interstate relations became increasingly chaotic, the scale, duration, and intensity of warfare escalated. It is my view that the intense military competition of that era facilitated the rise of an instrumental culture, first in the military sphere and then spreading to the political, economic, and ideological spheres. This led to the rapid development of military technologies and strategies, the emergence of large metropolitan centers and a monetary economy, a flourishing of philosophies, and the creation of a sophisticated state bureaucracy run by officials recruited on the basis of merit.

Social change of this nature, however, was not sustained. By the late Eastern Zhou period, Legalism, a philosophy that justified heavy-handed state power, became the prevailing political philosophy; armies came under the firm control of governments, and merchants were unable to turn their wealth into political power. Ancient China's rapid development in the end favored state power, setting the stage for unification under the Qin empire in 221 BCE. This pattern of development was generated by the dominance of military competition over other forms of competition, which in turn occurred because fierce interstate warfare subdued all the other power actors to the power of the state. Comparing this with the pattern of development in second-millennium Europe serves to illustrate.

Both early China and second-millennium Europe were caught up in multi-state competition, and the military competition in both societies generated enormous social dynamism.²² Europe developed in the direction of constitutional government and industrial capitalism; China, toward a bureaucratic empire. European dynamism occurred in a complex constellation of the four power sources and with multiple powerful actors (states, churches, the aristocracy, and the urban bourgeoisie), each of which held advantages over the others in certain aspects and at certain times and places. The messy coexistence of many powerful actors with different essential qualities and different goals led to the formation of a highly complex structure of competition among them. Most significantly, the competition among the states, churches, and the aristocracy in medieval Europe effectively checked state (political) power. After the Renaissance and Reformation, when the Catholic ecumene was greatly weakened and the state often became the most powerful of the actors as a result of increasingly fierce interstate warfare, the power of the bourgeoisie was also rapidly rising. The fierce military and economic competition in Europe compelled all the political actors to enhance their capacity to organize, to tax the people, and to extract natural resources. That compulsion imbued European society with a strong developmental character, so strong that it caused European philosophers to develop various linear/progressive philosophies of history. Although both military and economic competition pushed European society toward cumulative development, each furthered different structures of development. Military competition strengthens state power, economic competition magnifies societal power. The balance between the two, in conjunction with the influence of the still-powerful religious actors in Europe, allowed churches, universities, cities, and guilds to form themselves into corporate entities with protected rights and roles in society. Together and in competition with each other, these power actors gave rise to bureaucratic states in which power was checked and balanced by a constitution. They also fostered classical liberalism and promoted bourgeois power and ideologies glorifying privately oriented instrumental rationalism. Along with other favorable conditions,²³ this dynamism triggered a “breakthrough” in the development of industrial capitalism.

Eastern Zhou historical dynamism, by contrast, developed under a much simpler constellation of the four power sources and associated actors. In the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period, almost all the city-states were tiny. The four power sources were largely undifferentiated in that a city-state was simultaneously a lineage, a religious organization, and an economic and defensive unit. Religious organizations not under the direct control of the state were

22. Creel (1970); Hsu (1965); Weber (1951).

23. By “other favorable conditions,” I have in mind the availability of crucial technologies, in particular the steam engine, and ideologies that justified egoistic money-making activities.

virtually nonexistent. Only the state and the aristocracy were powerful actors. In Europe the rise of instrumental culture and the rapid development of technologies and organizational capacities were propelled by both military and economic competition, whereas Eastern Zhou development was primarily driven by military rather than economic competition. Only gradually did competition in the Eastern Zhou period spread to the economic and ideological spheres. The primacy of military-competition-driven dynamism increased state power, which was initially checked only by the power of the aristocracy. The aristocracy, however, was increasingly incapable of competing with the state as warfare expanded in scale, a meritocratic bureaucracy took root, and Legalism became the prevailing state ideology. After the late fifth century BCE, a synergism of the necessities of war, the power of the state, and Legalist ideology held sway: increasingly the power of ferocious warfare favored those states that were more instrumental in organization and action; the warfare of ordinances imposed by the Legalists enhanced state capacity to harness aristocratic power and exact resources from the population; and the states that were more able to act instrumentally by more thoroughly implementing Legalist regulations were also more likely to triumph in the fierce interstate military competition. This ascendancy of state power, together with other conditions (discussed in chapter 8), facilitated Qin's unification of China in 221 BCE.

The Qin empire, after subduing all the other states to its rule, controlled a battle-hardened military of over half a million warriors, a highly sophisticated bureaucracy, and an advanced transportation and communication system. Yet only fifteen years after its inception, this mighty empire was overthrown, making it the shortest-lived major dynasty in Chinese history. What followed was chaos and fighting, out of which emerged the Western Han dynasty. Less than seventy years after the founding of the Western Han dynasty, Confucianism, a loosely defined philosophical tradition that took shape in the late sixth century BCE but had never achieved predominance in politics, was refashioned into a state ideology. This quick transition from Legalism occurred in consequence of an unstable crystallization of the political-ideological power relationship formed during the late Eastern Zhou period.²⁴ The synergistic relationships among Legalist ideologies and regulations and military mobilization greatly strengthened the Qin state, encouraging Qin rulers to base their control on harsh Legalist ruling techniques rather than on state-society cooperation and normative consensus. The lessons learned from this unstable crystallization and from the rapid demise of the Qin dynasty influenced early Western Han politics to form a highly stable crystallization of the

24. I borrow from Micheal Mann (1993, p. 75) the concept of "crystallization" to depict a relatively stable constellation of patterned relationships among the four power sources, a constellation that we would traditionally call "social structure." Unlike the traditional concept of social structure, however, crystallization is meant to express not only the stability of social structural forces, but also their emergent and resolvable aspects.

four power sources—the Confucian-Legalist state, a system of government that merged political and ideological power, harnessed military power, and marginalized economic power. In the Confucian-Legalist state, the emperors accepted Confucianism as a ruling ideology and subjected themselves to the control of a Confucian bureaucracy, while Confucian scholars both in and out of the bureaucracy supported the regime and supplied meritocratically selected officials who administrated the country using an amalgam of Confucian ethics and Legalist regulations and techniques. This symbiotic relationship between the ruling house and Confucian scholars gave birth to what is by premodern standards a powerful political system—a system so resilient and adaptive that it survived numerous challenges and persisted up until the Republican Revolution in 1911. The historical patterns that emerged during and after the Han dynasty were developed from this particular crystallization of the four power sources.

Michael Mann argues that premodern empires were too constrained by their limited infrastructural capacities to be able to establish effective direct rule over an extensive domain, and therefore needed the “compulsory cooperation” of their subjects to maintain their rule.²⁵ Of the various kinds of compulsory cooperation, the most sophisticated was “coerced diffusion,” which denotes the spread of lifestyles and cultural practices throughout an imperial domain, much as in the Roman Empire.²⁶ As the Confucian-Legalist system achieved a more developed form during the Song dynasty (960–1279; see chapter 12), China became home to a form of “compulsory cooperation” that was more sophisticated than the Roman counterpart. Whereas the Roman elites shared only a similar secular culture, the Chinese elites were inculcated with quasi-religious Neo-Confucian values. The Roman rulers tried to but could neither suppress nor co-opt Christianity after its rise;²⁷ the Chinese rulers on the other hand actively adopted Confucianism as a ruling ideology, leading to the merging of political and ideological power.

This amalgam contributed to the resilience of China’s imperial system. With such a structure in place, it was in the interests of any new ruler of China, whether indigenous or foreign, to seek the cooperation of the Confucian elite and to amend rather than overturn the Confucian-Legalist political arrangement. This is why, each time after conquering China, most nomadic rulers sooner or later adopted the Confucian-Legalist political arrangement and embraced Chinese culture.²⁸ The fundamental pattern of Chinese politics transcended ethnicity;²⁹

25. Mann (1986, chap. 5).

26. Mann (1986, p. 279).

27. To be sure, Christianity was not a major factor in the collapse of the Roman Empire. It did, however, play a decisive role in preventing the rise of another unified empire in Europe after the Roman Empire collapsed.

28. Following Di Cosmo (1999a, p. 889), I define nomadism as “a socioeconomic system based on a fixed migratory cycle and overwhelmingly dependent on animal products.”

29. Creel (1970, p. 197); Huang (1997); Levenson (1965).

both foreign rulers and foreign subjects were expected to conform to Confucian cultural and political norms if they were to be accepted by the Chinese.³⁰

The amalgam of political and ideological power curbed military power. In the Confucian-Legalist state, generals had no legitimate position in politics and were subordinate to civilian officials. Even if a general successfully rebelled (which was rare in China after the second millennium CE), to maintain his power the general-turned-emperor then had to establish a close alliance with the Confucian scholar-officials and to form a new civilian government in which military officers remained marginal. Moreover, a military commander taking power and proclaiming himself emperor (e.g., the founder of the Northern Song dynasty) would draw lessons from his own success and adopt sophisticated strategies to divide and control the military. Beginning in the Northern Song period, generals were never again a major threat to the state.

Imperial Confucianism as it emerged during the Han dynasty was more a this-worldly ethical system than a transcendental religion.³¹ Yet it also incorporated many religious elements common to ancient China, such as ancestor worship, a concept of heaven as a conscious overseer of the affairs of the human realm, divination, predetermination, and yin-yang cosmology. In many ways, the role of Confucianism in China was similar to that played by Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism in other societies. The only major difference was that Confucian scholars were not priests in the service of a deity or deities but the learned elite of the state bureaucracy.³² Because there was a symbiotic relationship between Confucian scholars and the state, transcendental religions did not penetrate as deeply into the realm of politics as they did in other civilizations. As a result, the Chinese state was more willing to adopt a pluralistic attitude toward religions, and, as noted earlier, countless popular religions not only flourished alongside the world religions, but also sometimes developed at the expense of the latter.

The merging of political and ideological power also marginalized economic power. As noted earlier, this merging did not prevent commercial activities from flourishing in China; rather, within the Confucian-Legalist political framework merchants had neither a centralized power base from which to defend their interests (as did the cities of premodern Europe) nor an ideological weapon that would imbue money-making activities with a positive value. Beginning in the Northern Song and continuing into the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing dynasties

30. This in part explains why the development of Chinese nationalism did not follow a proposed general pattern according to which, as nationalism spread from west to east, ethnic nationalism gradually replaced civic nationalism (Deutsch 1966; Gellner 1983). Whether under Nationalist or Communist rule, Chinese nationalism remained more civic than ethnic.

31. See chapter 9 for more discussion on the rise of imperial Confucianism during the Western Han period.

32. Goossaert (2006, p. 310) even used the word “clergy” to describe certain roles that Confucian scholars played in imperial China.

(1644–1911), the market continued to play an important role in social life, and Chinese cities accommodated a significant number and level of economic functions. Nevertheless, merchants were incapable of turning their economic leverage into organized political power, and scholarly writings sympathetic to business activities did not undermine the Confucian ecumene. Merchants in China could only advance individually by behaving like and mingling with Confucian scholar-officials and gaining their respect. Therefore, despite the existence of lively “society-making” dynamics in late imperial China,³³ the Confucian-Legalist political-ideological framework, which functioned as a “capstone,” was not seriously undermined until the nineteenth century,³⁴ preventing any real Chinese breakthrough and development of industrial capitalism until change was forced by Western and Japanese imperialism.

QUALIFICATIONS

Readers may feel at sea from the use of some undefined concepts in the above overview of my main research questions and assertions, and perhaps also from briefly explained theories. Let me now provide some reasons. First, to present my research questions in an uninterrupted manner, all the concepts mentioned in the last section, such as “Confucianism,” “Legalism,” or “Confucian-Legalist state,” were invoked without elaboration. These are among the most frequently used concepts in the book, and they will be introduced in greater detail in empirical chapters.

Second, my idea that military and economic competitions propel a society’s cumulative development resembles competition models that have had numerous instantiations in both the natural and social sciences, such as evolutionary theory, social Darwinism, Malthusian theory, and microeconomics.³⁵ I have little sympathy for theories that establish a mechanical link between genetics and cultural behavior. Biological evolution takes place in the sphere of genetic mutation and environmental selection and follows Darwinian mechanisms; social changes take place in the cultural sphere, and follow the Lamarckian mechanism.³⁶ Social change follows the Lamarckian mechanism because effective human behaviors will be learned and/or positively reinforced to become dominant cultural traits. The Lamarckian nature of social change means that culture is more flexible and adaptable than are genetically programmed instincts. Yet, this flexibility and adaptability can be dangerous when it leads human beings to exploit natural resources and even tamper with natural laws for immediate

33. Brook (2005, p. 8). See chapter 12 for more discussion on the Song-Ming-Qing “society-making” initiatives and their limitations.

34. See Hall (1986) for the concept of the capstone state.

35. Sahlins (1977).

36. The essence of the Lamarckian evolutionary theory is that the biological traits acquired by an individual in life (such as strong muscles built up through physical exercise) are directly inheritable by his or her offspring.

gain, regardless of long-term negative consequences. It allows some social groups to glorify their conquest of nature or of other groups as “progress.” It has given human beings a formidable—and dubious—confidence in their own rationality and righteousness. In modern times, it even gives humans the capacity to build weapons of mass destruction with the power to destroy humanity many times over. Yet, rejecting early-modern European thinkers’ problematic glorification of conquest and domination in the name of historical progress should not lead us to deny the logic of competition. To analogize, few biologists will deny the modern theory of evolution (a modified version of the Darwinian theory developed after the rise of modern genetics) just because Darwin’s initial idea of evolution may have been inspired to a certain degree by the highly competitive nature of nineteenth-century English society.³⁷ Few will disagree that modern microeconomic theories are at once an ideology and a reasonable model of the competition-based market system developed in the West.³⁸ Also, I presume that few serious scholars will deny the roles of war and economic competition in generating cumulative development under certain conditions. We must understand, however, the crucial differences between biological evolution and human competition, and we must not see efficiency-driven development as unproblematic social progress. Accordingly, this book neither condemns nor glorifies competition and development, nor does it denounce or celebrate the rise of instrumental culture, industrial capitalism, or constitutionalism and democracy. In this book, “cumulative development” is only used to describe humans’ growing capacity to organize and produce and to articulate ideas and values. No teleology or any kind of positive valuation is attached to the concept.

Third, this book is primarily intended to provide a fresh explanation for many research questions related to persisting patterns in Chinese history. The questions and patterns that I have summarized above are for the most part not my own characterizations, since they are either widely accepted facts (e.g., China was unified under the Qin dynasty in 221 BCE) or they are patterns that have been repeatedly identified by historians.³⁹ In this age of deconstruction, however,

37. Schmidt (1971, p. 46).

38. Evolutionary metaphors have earned a prominent place in economics precisely because of the highly competitive nature of the market (Dopfer 2005; Hodgson 1993; Nelson and Winter 1982).

39. Ever since Karl Marx and Max Weber, these patterns have not only been widely accepted, but have also been subjected to various analyses and explanations (Creel 1970; Eisenstadt 1986; Elvin 1973; Fairbank and Goldman 2006; Hsu 1965; Huang 1997; McNeill 1982; Pines 2009; Wittfogel 1957). In his analysis of the “rationalization process” in early modern Europe and its absence in China, for example, Weber (1951) offers a lengthy discussion on at least four of the six historical patterns mentioned earlier: the centralization of imperial government, the cities’ lack of political autonomy, the great tolerance of Confucianism toward various cults and religions, and the existence of a meritocratic bureaucracy (and its similarities to the “administrative rationalization” in early modern Europe). Creel (1970, pp. 1–28), in his comparison of Chinese and European feudalism, also summarizes most of the six historical patterns. Elvin (1973, pp. 17–22) asks why imperial China was so large and remained that way in past millennia and answers the question in a technological, deterministic fashion. More recently, in his three-volume tour de force, *The History of Government*, the late Samuel Finer (1997) also touches on most of the six historical patterns that I have summarized. Neither Creel nor Finer, however, pay much attention to how these patterns came into existence.

I do want to stress that any characterization or conceptualization of social phenomena is vulnerable to charges of “essentializing” and risks being “destabilized” by new concepts or perspectives that often carry more biases. For example, if we follow Max Weber and assert that premodern Chinese cities were governed by state-appointed officials and that merchants were unable to gain an independent role in politics, others may immediately point to the drastic changes that took place in Chinese cities after the “medieval urban revolution” during the late Tang and Song dynasties,⁴⁰ and to the emergence of cities with important commercial functions during and after the Song dynasty.⁴¹ When one argues for the subordination of the Chinese military in politics, others can easily give examples of warlordism and military rebellions taking place throughout Chinese history but especially during the Age of Disunion and the mid-to-late Tang dynasty. If one points out the inward-looking characteristic of the Chinese empires,⁴² one will be reminded of the military expeditions along frontier areas during the early Tang and early Ming dynasties and that the Qing rulers retained some of their nomadic characteristics and actively involved themselves in Inner Asian geopolitics. Objections to the other historical patterns that I have posed as research questions can likewise be formulated. Emphasizing the temporal and regional variations in Chinese history is important. Yet the patterns of the Chinese past that I have listed have all been elaborated by scholars *comparing* China as a whole with other civilizations, especially the West. It is certainly the case that military commanders in imperial China rebelled and even established warlord governments. Yet in comparing imperial China with the Roman Empire, for example, it immediately becomes obvious that the Chinese military played a considerably smaller role in politics.⁴³ Also, although the nature of the premodern Chinese city changed greatly over time, merchants never had the kind of autonomy that their early-modern European counterparts enjoyed. Similar defenses can likewise be provided for my other characterizations of Chinese history. In short, attention to imperial China’s temporal and spatial diversity would no doubt generate other insights, but they do not fundamentally challenge the historical patterns based on comparisons between different historical periods of China and between Chinese and other major civilizations.

METHODOLOGY

The book’s data are drawn from the received texts, archaeological discoveries, and my travel in regions where the central events of Eastern Zhou history unfolded.

40. Elvin (1973); Skinner (1977, pp. 23–31).

41. See Johnson (1993) and Skinner (1977) for the economic importance of the Yangzi Delta during and after the Song dynasty.

42. Fairbank (1968, pp. 4, 8).

43. Finer (1997).

Over several years I traveled through present-day Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, Hubei, and Shandong provinces.⁴⁴ Wherever I went, I visited local museums, archaeological institutions, and major archaeological sites. I frequently consulted with archaeologists in the field and in local archaeological institutions on questions and topics that I found interesting or could not quite understand at the time. This was an extremely fruitful experience. From these experiences I gained a much keener sense of such agents as the terrain of the major states;⁴⁵ the scale of Eastern Zhou civilization and its technological achievements; the social stratification and the rituals of early China and their expression in burial practices; the cultural differences among the major states; the reasons for the strategic importance of certain cities and localities; the reasons troops at the time favored certain routes for their movements, and so on.

For this study, however, the most important data is from the received texts, especially *Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Zuozhuan*) (hereafter, *Zuo's Commentary*) and *The Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*) (hereafter, *Grand Historian*). For the sake of brevity,⁴⁶ the following discussion will largely focus on *Zuo's Commentary*, because its dating and authenticity are more controversial than the dating and authenticity of *Grand Historian*. I shall concentrate on the nature of this text and on the ways that I have used the information in this and other early Chinese texts.

Zuo's Commentary is one of three extant commentaries on a chronicle entitled *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*, hereafter, *Annals*), a collection of brief descriptions of major events occurring in or affecting the state of Lu between 722 and 481 BCE. It covers, among other things, Lu's internal affairs; relationships with other states; military conflicts; interstate conferences and covenants Lu entered into with other states; and natural phenomena, such as solar and lunar eclipses, floods, earthquakes, abnormal weather patterns, and plagues of insects and other pests. Of the three extant commentaries, *Zuo's Commentary* is by far the longest, covering the period between 722 and 468 BCE; it also contains accounts of some important events occurring before and after this period, making it the richest source on the history of Eastern Zhou China.

Zuo Qiuming, a scribe of the state of Lu and probably a contemporary of Confucius, was traditionally regarded as the compiler of *Zuo's Commentary*. Since

44. I have also traveled from Guyuan in present-day Ningxia to Xi'an to get a sense of the geography of the Wei River valley, Jing River valley, the terrain of this part of the loess plateau, the passes between mountains, and the passages through which the pastoral/nomadic tribes entered central China. Li (2006) gives an excellent account of the historical geography of the region that I explored.

45. Some changes have occurred over the past two millennia. For instance, the water level of rivers in northern China has dropped due to changes in weather patterns and to human activities; a few rivers have changed their courses; and many places have been deforested. Talking with local people provided me with firsthand knowledge of some of the recent changes.

46. The nature of a few other early Chinese texts will also be briefly discussed when they first appear in later chapters. See also Loewe (1993) for a bibliographical discussion of all the extant early Chinese texts.

the Tang dynasty (618–907), however, this view has repeatedly been challenged.⁴⁷ At present, most scholars accept that the book appeared at the end of the fourth century BCE, more than one and a half centuries after the death of Confucius (551–479 BCE).⁴⁸ Another major point of controversy over *Zuo's Commentary* concerns the authenticity of its records. Iconoclastic scholars of the generation of the May 4th Movement, such as Gu Jiegang (1893–1980) have downplayed its historical value,⁴⁹ though most contemporary scholars do not agree. The book covers topics related to almost every aspect of society. A significant part of *Zuo's Commentary* is a chronicle of dated events. For those events whose dates can be scientifically established, such as eclipses and other astronomical phenomena, the book shows great historical accuracy.⁵⁰ Unlike other received texts of the time, *Zuo's Commentary* contains numerous records and stories with no clear moral conclusions. Many stories and speeches in the text also reveal a society at odds with Confucian morality of the Warring States period.⁵¹ The text portrays the lives and activities of many important historical figures with little novelistic coherence, in some places approving and elsewhere deploring the activities of the same person. Finally, archaeological findings to date tend to corroborate the events, the existence of the historical figures, and many other details that enhance our confidence in the historical value of the text.

This said, it must nevertheless be stressed that the records in *Zuo's Commentary* (and in all the received texts) are biased. The compilers of *Zuo's Commentary* obviously shared certain kinds of values, which not only must have shaped their decisions on what to include, but also motivated them to adapt the entries to fit their moral vision. As often noted, *Zuo's Commentary* contains a substantial number of entries in which individuals “predict” later historical events. David Schaberg has also detected a fixed rhetorical pattern in the remonstrance speeches in *Zuo's Commentary*,⁵² which reveals that the book's compilers did not hesitate to edit as well. The fixed rhetorical pattern does not mean, however, that all these speeches were fabricated. Most likely, the compilers edited them from existing materials into the speeches we have now. For that reason, Yuri Pines has been able to discern several important changes in the content of these speeches over the centuries, reflecting intellectual transformations.⁵³ Pines's study shows

47. Cheng (1993, pp. 69–70).

48. The dating is from Yang (1979). Kamata Tadashi has reached a similar conclusion, based on the fact that the speeches recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* were able to correctly predict only historical events that happened before the end of the 4th century BCE (see Schaberg 1997, p. 136).

49. In 1919, when the news reached China that the Versailles Treaty would transfer all of Germany's rights in Shandong to Japan rather than return them to China, Beijing students initiated the May 4th Movement. The May 4th generation was known for its iconoclastic spirit because of its members' resolute rejection of traditional Chinese culture.

50. Schaberg (1997, p. 134).

51. The text, for example, contains many graphic accounts of wars and brutal violence in a matter-of-fact style.

52. Schaberg (1997, 2001).

53. Pines (1997, 2002).

that, under careful scrutiny, useful historical information can still be extracted from even the most ideologically contaminated speeches.

In view of the problems relating to *Zuo's Commentary* and all other early Chinese texts, I have established two criteria to guide my use of the historical data. First, I rely more heavily on basic factual information (e.g., when a war broke out and what the outcome was) than on the speeches and accounts that carry strong moral messages. *Zuo's Commentary*, *Grand Historian*, and a few other early Chinese texts contain numerous accounts that allow us to extract the following kinds of information: how a duke came to power (e.g., whether he inherited the throne or obtained it through a palace intrigue); how the reign of a duke ended (e.g., in natural death or assassination or conquest by one of the other states); how an aristocratic minister was promoted to a certain position and which lineage this minister came from; how many states participated in an inter-state conference, for what alleged purpose a conference was held and what the outcome was; how many generations of an aristocratic family remained in power in a state; in which year a state was conquered by another state; which states went to war and what was the outcome, and so on. This kind of information can tell us a great deal once it is properly contextualized.

One of my major efforts at contextualization was to quantify the types of events that in the early Chinese texts revealed a high frequency of occurrence. The most fruitful part of this effort was the quantification of war-related data, which provided many unexpected insights that led to new conclusions.

I gathered data for a total of 776 interstate clashes occurring between 722 and 221 BCE.⁵⁴ The data exclude both intrastate clashes between the ducal house and aristocratic families and among aristocratic families within a given state. However, if an intrastate conflict led to the rise of a new state (such as the wars between the Quwo polity and the Yi polity in the state of Jin), or if an intrastate clash involved other states, such an encounter was also counted as an interstate war. The war data of the earlier period (722–468 BCE) are mainly from *Zuo's Commentary* and *Grand Historian*, and the data for the later period (467–221 BCE) are mainly from *Grand Historian*.⁵⁵ For the late Eastern Zhou period, however, there is not a single text as rich and credible as *Zuo's Commentary*. Therefore, in constructing the data set for this period, I also consulted the works of many modern historians, in particular Fu Zhongxia et al., *Military History of China*, Yang Kuan, *History of the Warring States*, and Lin Jianming, *History of Qin*.⁵⁶

The war data set contains information on the year and season when a war broke out, the state(s) that initiated the war, the number and names of states

54. Many military conflicts must have failed to be entered in the historical records, but my war data likely includes most of the significant wars and battles of the time.

55. Particularly from the chapter entitled "Tables of the Six States."

56. Fu (1986); Lin (1981); Yang (1998).

involved in the war, the duration and outcome of the war, the causes of the war,⁵⁷ and the distance from the capital of the aggressor state to the battleground (war distance). If available, I also noted the numbers of warriors involved and the death tolls. My measurement of the war distance was based on five criteria: (1) I calculated war distance as the shortest distance between the capital of the aggressor state and the battleground, based on the maps in *The Historical Maps of China*, except where we know the exact route that an invading army traveled.⁵⁸ (2) Most battlegrounds of the late Eastern Zhou period are known; not so for those of many early Eastern Zhou military conflicts. In the latter case, the distance from the capital of the aggressor state to the capital of the state being attacked represents the war distance. Since city-states in the early Eastern Zhou only defended their capitals and immediate hinterland, the distance between capitals is plausible.⁵⁹ (3) For a war involving more than two states, the war distance was the distance between the two most powerful adversaries, measured according to the above two criteria. (4) If troops advanced along several routes, the longest route is the one of record. (5) If no information on the battleground or the location(s) of the warring states was recorded, I did not attempt any estimate. There are few such cases, mostly involving wars among states of non-Chinese origins.

Second, I read skeptically any morally charged speeches and stories in the texts, but did not simply dismiss them as fiction. I took the moral messages that the compilers of these ancient texts wanted to convey seriously, but only to the extent that they allowed me to better understand the intellectual milieu of the compilers' time and their possible biases. The evidence inadvertently revealed in the speeches and stories, that is, the unarticulated assumptions and the nature of the society that they unintentionally disclose is often extremely revealing. By comparing historical patterns discerned from the dated events with the unintentional disclosures made by those moral-laden speeches and stories, it was possible to reconstruct from the received texts a more plausible narrative than could be obtained from a face-value reading.

Finally, I frequently relied on sociological mechanisms to gauge the plausibility of some of the claims in the speeches and stories. Let me give one example: close to the end of the Eastern Zhou period, Qin became the superpower against which none of the other Warring States could compete. About this time, *Grand Historian* begins to present the following kind of storyline. Before or during a military campaign Qin would send secret agents into the enemy state to spread a rumor that its military commander was going to defect to Qin, whereupon the king of that state, believing the rumor, dismissed or even executed the

57. The coding scheme for the causes of military conflicts is discussed in chapter 8.

58. Tan (1982).

59. Gu (1993).

general, replacing him with one less capable,⁶⁰ and thus contributing to Qin's victory.⁶¹ Using social mechanisms I assessed the plausibility of these stories.⁶² Few people today would believe a rumor that the CEO of a major company was moving to a smaller and less promising company. But a rumor that suggests the opposite, that a small company's CEO is about to take charge of a larger and promising company, is always more convincing to more people. The same mechanism might also have been at work during the late Eastern Zhou period. Unlike in early-modern Europe, nationalistic ideologies did not develop in Eastern Zhou China (see chapter 8). Political advisers or military commanders of the time resemble the CEOs of modern companies in the ease with which they could leave one state for a better position in another, and neither the defectors nor the rulers who gladly received them seemed to have moral qualms about such actions. Qin was able to use rumor as an effective weapon precisely because of this prevailing perspective. The political advisers or military commanders of a weak state had a structurally embedded reason to shift their allegiance to Qin, making it hard for the kings of the weaker states to ignore the rumors of defection.⁶³ Discovery of such a mechanism behind a story line has not only increased my confidence in the reliability of some of the

60. *Grand Historian* ("History of Zhao," reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1829–32) contains several such stories. One story relates that King Xiaocheng (r. 265–245 BCE) dismissed Lian Po and appointed Zhao Kuo as chief military commander after a rumor spread that Lian Po was planning to surrender to Qin. In another story King Youmin (r. 235–228 BCE) kills Li Mu after Qin's secret agents set the two men at odds. And in yet a third narrative *Grand Historian* ("History of Wei," reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1863) tells of Qin's secret agents sowing discord between King Anxi of Wei (r. 276–243 BCE) and Prince Xinling, causing the prince to lose his post as Wei's army commander.

61. By the late Eastern Zhou period, as all the major states expanded and grew stronger, their dukes proclaimed themselves kings.

62. Further discussion of these rumors and their effects in the late Eastern Zhou period is deferred until chapter 8.

63. During the late Eastern Zhou period, the other six major Warring States also sowed discord to influence their rivals' politics, but their tactics were of a very different nature. For example, *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Yue Yi," reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2429) records that the Yan army sacked over 70 Qi cities but not the last 2 holdouts. Tian Dan, a Qi commander, spread the rumor that the Yan commander, Yue Yi, spared those 2 cities because he wanted to take control of the entire Yan and set himself up as king. According to Sima Qian, King Hui of Yan (r. 279–272 BCE) believed the rumor because of old animosities between himself and Yue Yi. There is more to this, this author would suggest. Yan was the weakest of the seven major powers, and the king of Yan had good reasons to doubt the loyalty of his highly capable general.

Grand Historian ("Biography of Bai Qi and Wang Jian," reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2335–36) also contains the following story: The Qin general Bai Qi intended to ride his wave of victory to conquer the state of Zhao after the War of Changping. Maneuvering to survive, the state of Zhao sent an envoy to Fan Sui, Qin's chief minister. The envoy warned Fan Sui that Bai Qi's influence in Qin would surpass his if Bai could claim the conquest of Zhao. Fan Sui thereupon advised King Zhao of Qin (r. 306–251 BCE) to relinquish the conquest of Zhao in favor of an advantageous treaty. All of these stories are tales of invidious maneuvering, but the techniques differ according to the occasion. Qi convinced King Hui of Yan to doubt the loyalty of his best general. Qin did the same, convincing King Anxi of Wei to dismiss his army commander. But the state of Zhao created suspicion not between the enemy king and his subordinate, but between that king's general and one of his civilian ministers, two men in different spheres but of equal status. This author can find no instances during the late Eastern Zhou period in which a weak state was able to sow discord between a Qin king and his ministers or generals. Moreover, when Fan Sui suggested that King Zhao end the war by treaty, it was with the highly plausible excuse that the Qin warriors were too fatigued to fight well. (The same biography contains Bai Qi's own assessment of the situation: "Although the Zhao army was eradicated at Changping, we also lost more than half of our warriors and depleted our resources.")

information in the received texts, and also greatly enhanced my understanding of late Eastern Zhou politics and society.

EPISTEMOLOGY

The above discussion of the use of mechanisms brings us to two related epistemological features of this book, both of which speak to my heavy reliance on social mechanisms in data collection and analysis as well as to my efforts at overcoming the limitations associated with mechanism-based explanations.⁶⁴

Mechanism-based explanation is the essence of “middle-range theory,” developed by leading American sociologists more than half a century ago; it is still a dominant approach in sociology.⁶⁵ A research project of this sort usually starts with one or several “why” questions (e.g., Why did England develop parliamentary democracy, Japan develop fascism, and China end up with the communist revolution?).⁶⁶ It is followed by delineating a set of mechanisms/factors that explain the questions, and by demonstrating through quantitative tests or/and qualitative narratives how the questions can be addressed by the logic embedded in the delineated social mechanisms/factors. Mechanism-based studies have many merits; most productively they reveal the existence and functioning of countless social mechanisms in society that would otherwise remain opaque. The number of research questions that a mechanism-based approach can handle, however, is very limited.⁶⁷ This quality of mechanism-based explanations leads to the epistemological problem of overdetermination (i.e., the many-to-one problem), that is, the fewer the number of research questions, the easier it is to find different logically plausible mechanisms/factors to answer the research questions and to come up with a plausible empirical account to back up the answer.⁶⁸ Mechanism-based empirical argument is thus easy to criticize.⁶⁹ To avoid this problem, I rigorously follow an epistemological criterion of knowledge acquisition of Greek origin to enhance the power of a theory by maximizing the number of research questions to which it can be applied. This

64. In this book, “social mechanism” is defined as a causal pattern triggered by known or unknown conditions (Elster 1998, p. 45).

65. Coleman (1990), Merton (1967, 1968), Stinchcombe (1991).

66. Moore (1966).

67. While one sociological research question can usually be explained by several different mechanisms, one mechanism is only one fixed causal pattern and answers just a particular question. Therefore unless we have a theory to order numerous mechanisms (causal patterns) into an organic relationship, simply raising multiple research questions and explaining each of them through a separate mechanism will only produce as many unrelated stories. Moreover, at the empirical level, sociologists often construct a mechanism-based explanation based on comparison of several cases. As I will argue later, the number of questions that we are able to raise for the comparative study is very limited.

68. Ragin (1997) has used the concept of “causal complexity” to characterize the problem.

69. In today’s sociological practice, the value of a mechanism/structural-based explanation lies less in its empirical validity than in the newness of the perspective. Most empirical sociological analyses have remained classics not because of their empirical credibility but because the mechanisms/structural forces that these studies have used in the explanation are important sociological forces in the most general sense.

book tries to raise and answer a large number of questions that historians and sociologists have found important. Moreover, some historical patterns that I have posed as research questions were only relevant to a particular time and place, which needs to be explained as well. Adoption of this epistemological standard compels me to pay close attention to a wide array of historical evidence in my theorization, and it greatly raises the bar for falsification; now, if a reader is unsatisfied with one of the explanations in this book, before an alternative explanation is presented as a critique, the reader has to think whether or not the alternative explanation is also a coherent part of a larger theory that can account for a range of research questions beyond those that have been proposed in this book.⁷⁰ This criterion of knowledge acquisition is so important that it should not be limited to natural science inquiry. Studies in the humanities and social sciences should also be subject to this criterion if their aim is to draw a complex and coherent picture. This epistemological criterion has compelled me to incorporate as many aspects as possible of the history of China and to weave them into a coherent account.

Once I decided to follow this epistemological standard, balanced comparative study (i.e., both research questions and explanation are based on systematic comparison of a few similar or contrasting cases), which has been a dominant mode of analysis in sociology,⁷¹ is no longer a methodological option. However hard one tries, the number of research questions that can productively be bundled to a single comparison is sharply limited by the nature of the cases. Let me illustrate this point using the research questions raised in two recent studies on early Chinese state formation.⁷² Hui's study seeks to understand why Eastern Zhou warfare ended in China's unification but similar events in early modern Europe ended in the formation of an international society.⁷³ Kiser and

70. Readers may argue that starting research with very few research questions is not problematic, because once other scholars see the problems associated with earlier studies, they will produce better theories that explain more research questions. This kind of approach sometimes works. Yet, starting a study by raising just one or a few research questions greatly lowers the difficultness of explanation, and induces us to start our research with biased assumptions and noncentral research questions. Quite a few sociological subfields have stagnated at certain points because of this.

71. Goldstone (1991), Goodwin (2001), Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003, chap. 1), Moore (1966), Skocpol (1979).

72. Hui (2005), Kiser and Cai (2003).

73. In writing this book, I have received comments from colleagues in several disciplines with different disciplinary imprints. For instance, a social scientist told me that my book's most illuminating part was the criticism of the work of Victoria Hui (2005) and suggested that I frame my theory along this line, but an early China historian remarked that I had spent too much time criticizing a work that does not deserve attention. I have tried to incorporate my colleagues' comments and suggestions, but at the same time to balance them with my own sense of priorities. Let me now defend my position by responding to the two opposing views with regard to my treatment of Hui's work. Hui's book has received much attention in political science, but a cold shoulder from early China scholars. Her book has serious weaknesses in data gathering and in contextualizing and interpreting the historical evidence. Her argument does not hold, judging from the evidence we have. In this sense, I agree with the early China scholars. Yet, we must acknowledge that the comparative methodology that shaped Hui's analysis and argument is widely accepted in the social sciences and that Hui has followed a discursive pattern of her own discipline in a respectable manner. In other words, the weaknesses of Hui's work are rooted more in the disciplinary weaknesses of political science than in her own scholarship. If we speak of disciplinary weaknesses, can we list any field of social sciences or

Cai ask why a partially bureaucratized administrative system developed in Qin China but not in the Roman Empire. Both are valid questions, yet the comparison of China and Europe breaks down if we combine the two research questions and ask why the development of the Eastern Zhou period not only led to the rise of bureaucracy but also ended in unification. Premodern Europe is no longer a good contrast because, although its development did not end in unification, bureaucracy did develop contemporaneously. The Roman Empire is also not a good contrast because while Romans created a unified empire, no bureaucracy developed until quite late in Rome's history.

Since balanced comparison does not meet the epistemological standard to which this book is committed, I opt instead for an in-depth historical approach, and introduce illustrative comparisons at various points to contrast the dynamics of different historical processes and reveal the underlying regularities. For instance, when I compare the historical development of early China with that of early modern Europe, my purpose is not to establish a theory to explain why industrial capitalism did not develop in ancient China but did in early modern Europe (because the question is anachronistic), nor is my purpose to establish a theory to explain why a unified empire emerged in ancient China but not in early modern Europe (because differences between the two cases are so vast that any simple theory would require a great twist in historical context). The purpose of my illustrative comparison is to reveal the workings of various general mechanisms (e.g., frequent and inconclusive interstate wars induce the rise of publicly oriented instrumental rationalism) and to highlight how similar mechanisms produced drastically different outcomes in different historical contexts. In short, this is a work of historical sociology, not comparative historical sociology.

The second epistemological feature of this book speaks to my concern about the limitations of mechanism-based analyses. In addition, it reflects my understanding of the history and the nature of sociological analysis. Let us return to the earlier discussion of why the king of a weak state would be receptive to rumors that his military commanders or officials were going to defect to a stronger state. In the earlier discussion, I explained this pattern using a social mechanism, making it clear that this mechanism has explanatory power *only* when the possible defectors lack a strong sense of patriotism or nationalism, as was the case in late the Eastern Zhou period. The changing weight of a social mechanism in different macrostructural conditions and historical contexts,⁷⁴ as this example illustrates,

humanities today (the field of early Chinese history included) that has not employed methodologies and perspectives which would appear either uninteresting or absurd to scholars of later generations? Moreover, Hui's work is very well regarded in political science (it has received two political science book awards). There are probably more people who know Hui's work than the work of renowned early China historians. In the end, I feel that ignoring Hui's work is not a wise thing to do, nor is framing my book around a criticism of Hui.

74. As Abbott (2001, p. 212) has aptly put it: "[G]eneral laws of sociologists are themselves circumscribed by larger historical changes; they apply only within historically defined epochs or presents, and are thus, in their own way, particulars."

constitutes one of the many weaknesses of mechanism-based explanations in social sciences research. Mechanism-based explanation faces the following problems when applied to social science research.⁷⁵ (1) The role of a social mechanism in social life depends heavily on whether or not the actors involved are aware of this mechanism.⁷⁶ (2) Due to the existence of an overwhelming number of social mechanisms, any historical process of even moderate complexity can always be explained by different mechanisms, and it is hard to judge the quality of alternative explanations unless we have a deep sense of the contexts under which certain mechanisms operate. (3) A real-life historical process is usually shaped not by one mechanism but by many. (4) Social mechanisms are very flexibly related. Different mechanisms operate in different orders and arenas and have different impacts in different historical processes. (5) The relative importance of some mechanisms in a historical process and their relationships to one another are shaped by the macro structural conditions of a society.

By promoting mechanism-based explanation without being fully aware of its weaknesses, sociology has developed in a direction that allows us to see the trees more clearly but the forest less so. The above discussion, therefore, highlights another key epistemological feature of this book: using numerous social mechanisms in explanations and organically linking these mechanisms, their changing relationships and changing impacts to the constellations and changes of the larger structural conditions of a society.

The research and narrative strategy that has been adopted by adhering to the above epistemological commitments can be characterized as a *macrostructure informed, mechanism-based study*. Unlike traditional mechanism-based research, this new research and narrative strategy aims at figuring out not only the workings of certain mechanisms/factors in historical settings, but also the constellations of these mechanisms/factors related to the research questions, the roles of the delineated mechanisms/factors in the constellation of all relevant mechanisms, patterned changes of the constellation over time, and how the constellation of mechanisms/factors is informed by the configuration of the political, ideological, economic, and military power structures of a society at a given time. The research strategy adopted in the book thus employs both art and science. It is a science because my explanations of the micro-meso-level historical processes are mostly mechanism-based (and thus scientific). It is also an art because the process of delineating the relative importance, constellation, and patterned changes of mechanisms/factors under a particular configuration of the four power sources relies heavily on historical sensibility and dialectical imagination.

75. See Zhao (2009a) for more discussion on the nature and limitations of mechanism-based analyses in sociological studies.

76. For instance, the mechanism of the free-rider problem will not prevail in an organization if the leaders of that organization have anticipated the problem. See Olson (1965) for a systematic discussion of the free-rider problem.

Finally, the quality of the artistic construction and imagination in a study can be judged by the number of research questions that the constructed theory is able to explain. The judgment process brings together the two epistemological standards of this book.

The theory of this book is not a systems theory that resembles Newton's Laws of Motion in physics. In fact, the theory developed here is not even close to a unified covering law similar to Darwinian evolution in biology. This is because social actors assign meanings to their actions, learn and make mistakes, and face unintended consequences. The four power sources upon which any society is based are thus able to enter into potentially endless types of relationships and shape society in as many different and often opposing ways which no neat covering law could possibly accommodate. Therefore, since some historical twists and turns in the book are not explained but only contextualized, hermeneutics is also a crucial component of my historical narrative. Moreover, the theory presented in this book does not explain everything that happened in Chinese history. New research questions and other levels of analysis will surely lead to different insights and theories. This book provides only *a* history, not *the* history, of China. Yet, by adopting the two epistemological standards as the criteria, this book does seek to set a standard in the sense that, when an alternative theory to mine is proposed to explain the same research question, that theory needs to convince readers that it is able to explain more research questions than are explained in this book.

A Theory of Historical Change

My theory of historical change can be summarized in one sentence: the dialectic of *competition and institutionalization* is the major engine of historical change. This theory is based on two premises: first, humans are strongly inclined to compete for domination, individually and collectively; second, the means of human competition may be ideological, political, economic, military, or a fusion of some or all of these.¹

Although competition is innate and universal, it is a society's dominant social actors whose competition and institutionalization dialectic generates significant historical patterns. In the premodern world, before the "people" emerged as a powerful social actor, conflicts among elites and elite building programs were the most crucial engines of historical change.² Different societies generate different kinds of dominant social actors, and the characteristics of these actors significantly shape how the elite compete as well as the patterns of history. The nature of societal competition varies according to technological, demographic, and geographic and environmental contexts, which in turn are partly shaped by power networks institutionalized as a result of past competitions.³

Although I see human competitiveness as the ultimate engine of historical change, I reject the Spencerian notion that competition will necessarily lead us toward "coherence, multiformality, and definiteness,"⁴ and a better society. Human competition operates at the cultural level and follows the positive-feedback Lamarckian mechanism, a mechanism that can bring about quick change but has

1. This chapter presents the theory of historical change that has guided my analysis of the patterns of the Chinese past. Since the book on the whole is empirical rather than theoretical, I have restricted the theoretical discussion to this single chapter. I shall not present a thorough review of relevant literature, and most definitions and qualifications of important concepts will be only briefly presented in the notes.

2. See Crone (1989, chap. 4); Lachmann (2000, 2010).

3. Technology and human demography are both to a great extent the products of structurally constrained human activities. In this sense, they are both endogenous to my theory of social change. However, once a certain technology or demographic condition exists, it will have an impact on historical dynamism in ways that are not entirely reducible to the structural conditions of a society. Geography and environment are fundamentally exogenous to human society, although humans' capacity to alter geographic and environmental conditions has increased exponentially since the rise of industrial capitalism. Even some premodern human activities led to extensive deforestation and desertification with consequent impact on the further development of human societies (Elvin 2004). I shall discuss the roles of these contexts in my theory toward the end of the chapter.

4. Spencer (1967, p. 216).

no equilibrium.⁵ The nature of competition gives our culture greater flexibility and adaptability than do our genetically programmed instincts, but at the same time, as I argued in the introduction, it also poses multiple dangers that threaten the existence of human society. Although human competition occupies a central place in my theory, I attach no teleology or positive valuation to competition and the resultant historical change.⁶

My theory shares some similarities with the neofunctionalist theory of social-cultural Darwinism. Yet, there are two crucial differences between them. First, although some neofunctionalists employ the concept “struggle for reinforcement,”⁷ in their theory, the engine of historical change is not competition but such factors as innovation, accidental social mutation, differentiation, diffusion, conditioning, habituation, enculturation, isomorphism, and interstitial development.⁸ Second, and perhaps more importantly, most neofunctionalists do not differentiate among types of social power, such as economic, political, military, and ideological, as I do in this book. The idea that different ideal-typical aspects of human competition will generate very different selective pressures, which is central in my theory, is underdeveloped in neofunctionalist thinking.

Before moving on, I should note that a significant part of my theory is based on deductive reasoning from ideal-typical categories.⁹ Deductive reasoning in the social sciences is mostly used by analytic philosophers and economists. Analytic philosophers and economists, however, tend to deduce theories about the emergence of a “good society” from a rather artificial assumption about the

5. See Pierson (2004, chap. 1) for an excellent account of the general properties of positive-feedback mechanisms and the various kinds of social processes that are positive feedback in nature.

6. Spencerian theory neglects to take into account the fact that humans do not compete for a single reason but rather for a mix of reasons, ranging from military and economic to political and ideological. Each of these stimuli generates competitions of varying natures and social changes of different forms. This neglect makes Spencer's social Darwinism a seriously undersocialized theory.

7. Blute (1981); Langton (1979).

8. See, for example, Alexander (1988); Alexander and Colomy (1990); Blute (1981); Clark (2005); DiMaggio and Powell (1983); Krücken and Drori (2009); Runciman (2003); Mann (1986); Turner (2003).

9. Our thinking and analysis must be based on concepts, but the social reality a concept captures is almost always heterogeneous. Therefore, applying a concept that originated in a particular time and place to seemingly similar events that happened at different times and places is always subject to some degree of uncertainty. To cope with that problem, I follow Weber's ideal-type method (Weber 1949, pp. 89–90; 1968, pp. 20–22). Almost all the concepts used in this book, such as feudalism, religion, Confucian-Legalistic State, and Neo-Confucianism, should be understood as ideal types, because each tries to represent phenomena occurring in very different times and places, with fuzzy boundaries. When the heterogeneous variations of a social phenomenon follow a pattern of normal distribution, the ideal type captures the centrality of that phenomenon. In most cases, a social phenomenon's heterogeneous variability does not follow any mathematical pattern. An ideal type is created to embody the essence of that social phenomenon in order to allow empirical analyses guided by particular research questions. An ideal type is a mental construct, or, in Weber's own words, a “utopia.” It is “an unreality which is unambiguous, exact and wholly abstract in order to perceive through it a reality which is ambiguous, volatile and elusively concrete” (Abrams 1982, p. 79). But, even though ideal types are just mental constructs, the quality of a particular ideal type can be judged by its ability to explain questions that are generally regarded as substantively and normatively important. The more questions that an ideal type is able to guide us to answer, the higher the value that ideal type has. A set of ideal types that embodies or represents some crucial “dimensions” of a society is an extremely useful tool for both empirical analysis and theorization.

previous state of that society (such as Rawls's "veil of ignorance," or Olson's "roving bandits").¹⁰ The deterministic (or teleological) nature of these theories does not help much in explaining the messy patterns of history. In contrast, a deduction based on ideal types begins, not with one artificially constructed assumption, but with *all* plausible ideal-typical aspects of human competition: economic, political, military, and ideological. Competition in these various ideal-typical aspects generates very different types of social mechanisms (detailed later in the chapter). Different constellations of those four aspects, or sources of power, therefore, not only shape the structures of human competition differently, but also lead to the dominance of different social mechanisms and different patterns of historical change. Thus, the theory developed in this chapter has a nondeterministic flexibility compatible with the spirit of contemporary historical thinking. At the same time, it retains the rigor of traditional structural analysis, something that most contemporary historical studies lack.

Once we have a general theory of historical change, our empirical task becomes clear. We need to identify the historically embedded configurations of the four power sources in a given society; identify patterns of historical development that might plausibly result from those configurations; and delineate the logics behind changes in a configuration that produce new competition structures and new dynamics of historical change. Identifying particular constellations of the four power sources and their patterns of change requires historical sensibility and artistic imagination, though the validity of each identification is ultimately judged by the number of research questions that the constructed constellation is able to explain.

Weber ingeniously developed an ideal-type method to cope with social complexity, though he made no effort to engage in ideal-type-based deductive reasoning. Later scholars tend to use Weber's ideal-type method as a categorization device rather than as a method that allows one to switch from empirical induction to deduction without at the same time losing a sense of empirical complexity. My approach could, therefore, be seen as an initial step toward better fulfilling the theoretical, methodological, and empirical potential of ideal-type-based analysis. Readers should keep in mind that none of my deductions is carried out mathematically. A certain amount of induction and interpretation always coexists with my deductive reasoning. What I have done here should be regarded as

10. Rawls (1971); Olson (2000). Rawls's "veil of ignorance" concept is well known. Less known is perhaps Olson's "roving bandit" allegory, which can be briefly summarized as follows: when a group of roving bandits enters a place, they can in theory do one of two things: they can kill the indigenes and possess their property, or they can subjugate the indigenes and tax them. According to Olson, roving bandits are inclined to adopt the latter strategy, turning themselves into stationary bandits, because taxing people is in most cases a more productive and sustainable strategy. Yet once the bandits start to tax the indigenes, they want higher production and more efficient taxation. To achieve this end, the bandits must eventually accept the rights of the local people. According to Olson, this process leads to progressively closer state-society relationships and even the rise of constitutionalism and democracy.

an initial attempt at ideal-type-based deduction in social science analysis. Should ideal-type-based deduction become a dominant approach, later scholars will surely see the primitiveness of my attempt.

THE THEORY

Humans and chimpanzees share many similarities. Chimps show aggression and defend their territory, enter “political” relationships, and use tools to extract resources from the environment—as do humans. Humans, however, additionally need to understand the meaning of their lives and to justify their actions and intentions to themselves and to their fellows. Humans’ competitive behavior is limited by basic human behavioral traits—that is, by their territorial, political, economic, and normative/ideological behaviors. These behavioral traits form four ideal-typical aspects of human competition and are sources of social power.¹¹ More specifically, *economic power* derives from humans’ desire to increase their capacity to extract, transform, distribute, and consume the resources of nature¹²; *military power* derives from human aggression and the resulting need for organized defense; *ideological power* derives from humans’ need to justify or glorify their lives and actions; and *political power* derives from humans’ social nature and desire to formulate centralized-coercive regulations that will ensure dominance and cooperation. These four power sources give rise to overlapping, intersecting power networks and organizations, and different preponderances and constellations of these four power sources produce different societies.

The four power sources should be understood as ideal types. Actual persons and organizations are *functionally multifarious*; that is, they do not reify only a single power source.¹³ For example, the state is the most important embodiment of ideal-typical political power, but an actual state may also wield enormous economic, ideological, and military power, reifying all these aspects of competition. The church is one of the most important embodiments of ideological power, but the medieval Catholic Church at its zenith had large land holdings (economic power), commanded armies (military power), and played an extensive role in European politics (political power). In fact, once a possessor of any one of the power sources rises to predominance, it always becomes functionally multifarious, expanding its control over possessors of other power sources as much as

11. Here, *social power* is understood as the capacity of social actors to reorder the human and natural environment in order to pursue their own objectives. More powerful social actors are more capable of legitimizing their claims, indoctrinating others, ignoring and overriding the claims of others, and mobilizing resources to repress others. Poggi (1990, p. 3) provides a definition of the concept that is more or less in line with the definition here.

12. These definitions of the four power sources are developed from Mann (1993, pp. 7–9). Mann’s original definitions stress the functionality of the four power sources; my definitions incorporate human competitiveness and lust for dominance as well.

13. Mann (1986, p.17) coined the term “functionally promiscuous” to capture this multifarious nature of social power.

possible, until its expansion is counterbalanced by the resistance of other power holders in some aspect of the competition. In this sense, the degree of a power holder's multifariousness indicates its predominance in society.

My theory is greatly indebted to Michael Mann's theory as outlined in his magisterial *Sources of Social Power*.¹⁴ I have borrowed concepts developed by Mann (e.g., interstitial development, caging, and crystallization) as well as his differentiations between extensive versus intensive,¹⁵ authoritative versus diffuse, collective versus distributive, and despotic versus infrastructural power.¹⁶ The key difference between Mann's theory and mine lies in our differing senses of the engine of historical change. Mann cites the same four power sources but defines their operation in terms of their functions, and he explains historical changes as resulting from forces such as "interstitial development" and "unintended consequences."¹⁷ According to my theory, the four power sources are sites of competition for dominance among social actors, and I view the dialectical interaction of competition and institutionalization rather than interstitial development as the key engine of historical change. The narrative and analysis of this book, therefore, gives much more attention to the patterned behavior of *social actors*.

To be sure, Mann does not ignore the role of competition in historical change. For example, he has stated that "[t]he struggle to control ideological, economic, military, and political power organizations provides the central drama of social development."¹⁸ In his analysis of the rise of modern Europe, Mann also mentions that Christian Europe was a highly competitive civilization.¹⁹ Yet, in Mann's theoretical and empirical accounts, competition is not the key impetus to historical change. Rather, Mann posits a caging theory to explain the rise of civilization and city-states, proffers logistical constraints as the key to the nature of empires, and explains the rise of modern Europe as resulting from three unintended consequences of the Catholic ecumene (which provided a transregional identity, acted

14. Mann (1986, 1993).

15. According to Mann (1986, pp. 7–9), *extensive power* refers to the ability to organize large numbers of people over far-flung territories in order to engage their cooperation, however minimal. *Intensive power* refers to the ability to organize closely and to command a high degree of commitment from those organized, whether the areas or numbers so organized are great or small. *Authoritative power* is exercised by individuals or groups and comprises express commands and conscious obedience; whereas *diffuse power* over a population results in similar social practices that "embody power relations but are not explicitly commanded."

16. Mann's definition and empirical application of the term "infrastructural power" focuses on what I call *infrastructural hardware*—that is, roads, coinage, and communication technologies that allow some form(s) of power to penetrate society. Mann neglects, however, an aspect of infrastructural power that I call *infrastructural software*—that is, the capacity to evoke compliance and voluntary cooperation (Zhao 2001, p. 18).

17. In biology, the term *interstitial development* refers to the tendency for major evolutionary impetuses to come, not from dominant species, but rather from species living interstitially and becoming significant only as the environment changes. In sociological parlance, it means that, although social relations tend to become institutionalized in forms beneficial to dominant social actors, those forms will always coexist with marginal social relations, which, as they grow stronger, generate unanticipated consequences (e.g., the interstitial rise of the bourgeoisie in premodern Europe).

18. Mann (1993, p. 9).

19. Mann (1986, p. 504).

as guarantor of the civilization, and facilitated long-distance trade).²⁰ Mann's analysis of each historical episode is always insightful, but he seldom provides explanations of how history unfolded from one episode to another. Reading Mann's work as a whole, one might have the impression that his empirical accounts are descriptive, postpositive, fragmented, and somewhat undertheorized.

ECONOMIC POWER AND MILITARY POWER

Economic competition and the power that it generates manifest five characteristics. First, competitors can easily assess their performances. In other words, ideal-typical economic competition has very clear-cut criteria for winners and losers. Second, winners in economic competition must have produced or extracted natural resources more effectively than their rivals. This triggers *cumulative development*, or the kind of social change that accelerates humans' capacity to produce and accumulate wealth. Third, economic competitors own their gains. Fourth, economic power is noncoercive, because pure economic transactions can only happen between two willing parties. Finally, economic power is more decentralized or diffused than political and military power, because every individual is more or less motivated to engage in economic activities for sustenance and for profit, and because no one or even several economic enterprises can dominate every possible area of economic life.

Like economic competition, ideal-typical military competition also affords a clear-cut criterion for winners and losers (e.g., battles and wars are either won or lost by a given combatant). Moreover, military winners also have to produce or extract natural resources more effectively than their rivals, thereby triggering *cumulative development*. The similarities between economic and military power end here. Military competition has destruction as an aim and production as an unintended consequence.²¹ On the other hand, economic competitors aim for maximum efficient production but may unintentionally bring about such negative consequences as economic crisis, huge income disparity, and environmental degradation. Ideal-typical military competition always has as its end some type of public good (e.g., the acquisition of land, resources, or national pride). But military power can be wielded by a powerful few and exercised coercively. It tends, therefore, to be centralized and oppressive, even more so than political power.

20. Mann (1986, chaps. 3, 5, 9, 12).

21. Military might, by enabling overexpansion, can lead to the decline or collapse of a state, and the damage wrought by military competition can sometimes result in the general recession of a region or an entire civilization (Nef 1950). Yet history has so far shown the following trends: when a state declines as a result of military overexpansion, other states will seize the opportunity and rise up; when a state or a civilization is devastated by war, the organizational capacity and technological know-how that were achieved in the military competition will not be entirely lost, but will be crucial to further cumulative impetus.

Economic and military competitions, then, shape historical change in the following ways: First, whereas nineteenth- and early twentieth-century philosophers and historians tended to see history as driven by a teleological force, most contemporary historians insist that every history and historical event is unique, and they deny the existence of general patterns entirely. This contemporary epistemology has become the basis for countless studies of increasingly minor historical details, all intended to do away with various previously “essentialized” concepts and arguments. The nature of economic and military competition presupposes that, notwithstanding that history is not teleological or propelled by a single logic or any mechanical combination of logics, it is cumulatively developmental. This is largely because economic and military competitions both have clear-cut criteria for winners and losers. Such competition structures motivate the competitors—military as well as economic—to extract more resources and to carry out more efficient production in order to achieve or maintain dominance.²²

Scholars have long analyzed warfare’s various restructuring effects on society,²³ and they all take more or less for granted the Spencerian implication of warfare for social change: warfare compels all the warring parties to act instrumentally, to better organize themselves, to extract natural resources, and to produce more efficiently. Together, these instrumental actions further a society’s development. Yet readers must keep in mind that actual warfare, as opposed to ideal-typical military competition, has a different and far more complicated impact on social change. For instance, if one state completely destroys another in a single battle (as in a successful nomadic conquest), no opportunity to learn exists for the defeated state, even though the event may have some impact on other states that closely observed it. Only when wars’ outcomes are mostly inconclusive and the warfare thus tends to devolve into repetitive battles, are the opponents able and likely to seek changes that would grant them the upper hand.²⁴ Warfare among feudal states in traditional societies came closest to bringing about rapid cumulative developmental changes, as perennial military competition among multiple states of comparable military strength provided the impetus for such changes. That

22. Cultural historians, such as Peter Burke (1992, pp. 134–35), have also recognized the cumulative impetus of military and economic competition. Leading cultural historians today have started to note the weaknesses of their approaches and have rediscovered the roles of “structural forces” in shaping social changes. The following comment by Sewell (2005, p. 49) underscores my point: “[D]uring the very period when historians have gleefully cast aside the notion of structural determination, the shape of our own social world has been fundamentally transformed by changes in the structures of world capitalism.”

23. See, for example, Andreski (1971); Bayley (1961); Best (1982); Black (1991); Brauer and van Tuyl (2008); Campbell (2002); Clark (1958); Creighton and Shaw (1987); Downing (1992); Hale (1985); Howard (1976); Parker (1988); Roy (2006); Winter (1975).

24. For example, at the end of the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453) both France and England were greatly strengthened by their newly developed taxation capacities, standing armies, and military technologies (especially the longbow).

is why both Eastern Zhou China and second-millennium Europe were sites of extraordinary historical dynamism.²⁵

Second, though history is cumulatively developmental, it is nonlinear. Historical development is nonlinear because time and place affect the constellation of the four power sources, and hence the nature and speed of cumulative development.²⁶ History can be stagnant or recessive when the four power sources are constellated in certain manners.²⁷ Cumulative development accelerates in a society only when, among the four power sources, economic and/or military competition are dominant.

Third, when economic and military competitions figure importantly in a society, the thinking of that society reflects their importance. It was not an accident that ideologies such as social Darwinism, economic liberalism, Hegelian linear history, and Marxism all emerged in nineteenth-century Europe: they emerged in considerable part because Western imperialism and industrial capitalism had greatly spurred Western societies' productive capacities and had misled the intellectuals of the time into viewing history linearly.

Fourth, when economic and military competitions are intensified and social actors' capacities to organize, produce, and extract natural resources are greatly increased, those capacities generate intended as well as unintended consequences on the nature and development of political and ideological power and power holders. These influences include, but are not limited to, the development of technologies for political control and the dissemination of information, the expansion of the resources available to political and ideological actors, the development of more sophisticated political and ideological institutions, and the diffusion of instrumental logics of economic and military competition into the political and ideological arenas. Of course, the relationships among the four power sources are never unidirectional, but are instead entwined, dialectical, and mutually constitutive.

Fifth, although both economic and military competition generate clear winners and losers and accelerate cumulative development, they differ in their impact on the distribution of social power. Military power can easily be gathered into the hands of a few.²⁸ When military forces are under the control of a state, military competition compels the ruler of the state to govern and tax more efficiently, and enables the ruler to use the acquired military power to dominate the domestic scene.²⁹ Military competition thus strengthens the centralized power of the state.

25. For analysis of war and second-millennium European development, see Tilly (1992); Winter (1975).

26. That is why the differing speeds of historical changes are central to Braudel's (1980) theorizing.

27. The developmental impetus of military competitions in the premodern the Indian and Islamic worlds, for example, was inhibited by the configuration of political and ideological power sources in the two societies (Hall 1987).

28. Mann (1986, p. 28).

29. Ertman (1997); Finer (1975); Hintze (1975); Mann (1986, chap. 13); Rasler and Thompson (1989); and Tilly (1992). Tilly (1975, p. 42) argues that war tended "to promote territorial consolidation, centralization, differentiation in the instruments of government and monopolization of the means of coercion." Porter (1994, p. 10)

In contrast, a competitive commercial environment not only enhances the total amount of economic resources in the society but also facilitates the emergence of numerous big and small economic power holders within the society. Economic competition thus boosts the decentralized power of the society.

Sixth, both economic and military competitions shape people's motivation. The clear-cut criteria for economic or military victory compel the participating agents to act instrumentally to gain the upper hand. These kinds of competition stimulate the development of instrumental rationalism (i.e., means-ends calculations become the only basis for decision-making) and allow instrumental motives to act as powerful engines of cumulative social change. Ideological competition does not produce clear winners and losers, nor does it reinforce instrumental thinking and action. Thus, different kinds of social power and the competitions they beget lead perforce to the rise of different motivational structures among the people in a society. Motivation thus does not have a fixed role in social change.³⁰

Seventh, once a war has been won, more or less all the people on the winning side benefit. Military competition thus spurs development of *publicly oriented instrumental rationalism*. By contrast, ideal-typical economic competition benefits only the winning agents. In other words, economic competition fosters the development of *privately oriented instrumental rationalism* in the society. Moreover, to win a war, the state and army must achieve high efficiency in weapon production, taxation, command structure, and so on. Military competition also facilitates the development of bureaucratic institutions.

Eighth, whereas people tend to differ in their political and ideological commitments (difference in kind), almost everyone inclines to economic benefits. In other words, competitive economic activities draw virtually everyone, and the unintended consequences associated with economic competition can, usually peacefully and effectively, transform almost every aspect of society, from demography, levels of urbanization, stratification and mobility, education, and technological development to the motivations of the people and culture of society.³¹

LEGITIMACY AND RATIONALITY

Before discussing the nature of ideological power and political power and their role in historical change, I must first turn to two concepts crucial to my empirical analysis—legitimacy and human rationality.

observes that military conflict aggrandizes state power "by destroying traditional structures and sources of societal resistance that restrain central authority; by giving state leaders both the impetus and the moral justification for repressing factions, enlarging armies, and raising taxes; by fostering a sense of crisis and an acceptance of the violence that accompanies coercive rule."

30. Rather than a constant, as Mann (1986, pp. 2–3) has claimed.

31. For instance, the recent rise of the market economy in China has in several important aspects brought about more enduring social changes than did the earlier attempts by the Maoist state to engineer changes.

Weber argues that habit, affection, and rational calculation are the three bases of human compliance; accordingly, he sees tradition, charisma, and logical reasoning as three ideal-typical means through which social power can be legitimized.³² By contrast, I do not equate the sources of legitimacy with the bases of human compliance but with the possible ways to justify dominance: the use of fair laws/regulations and procedures, provision of public goods, and values (traditional, religious, or ideological) shared. Consequently, and correspondingly, I propose classifying the sources of legitimacy for dominant social actors as follows: *legal-procedural legitimacy*, *performance-based legitimacy*, and *ideological legitimacy*.

A social actor enjoys *legal-procedural legitimacy* when laws and regulations are binding for all relevant social groups and when the procedures it employs are commonly confirmed by a generally recognized process (such as regular elections). A social actor enjoys *performance legitimacy* when the people perceive its actions to be beneficial. A social actor enjoys *ideological legitimacy* when its domination is backed up by a value claim that most people recognize as their own—or sufficiently similar.³³

Closely related to the subject of legitimacy is Weber's classification of human rationality, which Mann has ignored, in part because of his conviction that motivation is a constant and plays little role in historical change.³⁴ Human motivation, however, has multiple aspects, and the relative importance of each in shaping a population's motivational structure changes. Changes in a population's motivation structure will have great impact on the society. According to Kalberg,³⁵ four different ideal types of rationality can be discerned in Weber's writing: *instrumental*, *theoretical*, *formal*, and *value (substantive)*. *Instrumental rationality* is behind social action that is motivated by purely pragmatic and egoistic interests; *substantive rationality* guides social action according to certain principles or traditions; *formal rationality* legitimizes those social actions that follow laws, rules, and regulations; *theoretical rationality* "involves a conscious mastery of reality through the construction of increasingly precise abstract concepts rather than through action."³⁶

I modify this Weberian taxonomy as follows: I retain the concept of instrumental rationality, but distinguish two subtypes: *privately oriented instrumental rationality* (means-ends calculated for private benefit) and *publicly oriented*

32. Weber (1978, p. 28); Bendix (1962, pp. 290–97).

33. In this new categorization, Weber's charismatic legitimacy can be supplementary to any kind of legitimacy, but it tends to be an extreme form of ideological legitimacy. See also Zhao (2001, pp. 19–23) for more discussion of the concept of legal-procedural, ideological, and performance legitimacies; Beetham (1991) for an alternative classification of the sources of legitimation; and Hechter (2009) for a recent survey on the topic.

34. Mann (1986, pp. 2–3).

35. Kalberg (1980).

36. Kalberg (1980, p. 1152).

instrumental rationality (means-ends calculated for the public good). I combine theoretical and formal rationality into a single category: *theoretical-formal rationality*. Although theoretical rationality and formal rationality employ different modes of thinking, they both are toolkit types of rationality that can extend humans' capacities for instrumental calculation as well as assist humans to develop a certain value or ideology into a sophisticated theory. They also tend to be more fully developed in a society dominated by instrumental rational culture because they are very effective tools in assisting instrumental calculation.³⁷

Finally, I retain the concept of value rationality, but restrict its use to calculations based on a given value or tradition. In Weber's original formulation, rational calculation guided by historical precedent is regarded as an exercise of value rationality. However, I propose a new category—*historical rationality*. Although chapter 6 contains a fuller exploration of historical rationality and its structuring effects on the history of China (where historical rationality developed precociously), a brief definition and discussion of its differences from the other forms of human rationality is in order here.

In its ideal-typical form, historical rationality can be defined as humans' conscious efforts to comprehend both past and present by understanding historical patterns. Historical rationality privileges holistic approaches. It prompts social actors to be less concerned with the immediate causal impact of social actions and to concentrate instead on the interrelatedness of historical forces and agencies, unintended consequences, and the dialectical nature of historical change. It also legitimizes social actions that accord with the wisdom derived from prevailing perceptions of historical regularities.

Like theoretical-formal rationality, historical rationality is a toolkit type of rationality, but the two may be ideal-typically antithetical. Theoretical-formal rationality tilts toward in-depth and abstract reasoning aimed at constructing causal laws that can reveal patterns in some isolated relationships. Historical rationality employs holistic approaches aimed at making sense of larger historical pictures. Theoretical-formal rationality tends to be poorly developed in places where historical rationality develops precociously, and vice versa.³⁸ Even today, this antithetical tendency persists. This is why actors who have great faith in humans' capacity to order the world rationally aided by theoretical-formal tools are inclined to see the historical sensibility as traditional and irrational; whereas actors who have great historical sensibility tend to see actors with abundant faith in humans' rational capacity to order and reorder the world as nearsighted.

37. See Mann (1986, chap. 14) for an excellent discussion of the multiple problems that Christianity faced during and after the Reformation.

38. Chapter 6, which analyzes Eastern Zhou China's highly developed historical rationality and its shaping effect on ancient China's philosophy, deals further with this antithesis.

IDEOLOGICAL POWER AND POLITICAL POWER

Ideal-typical ideological competition resembles debating. Ideological competition does not spur the cumulative development of a society because humans's capacity to produce cannot be enhanced verbally. Except for ideas that can be falsified—as in the physical sciences—most of the ideas that humans have created are in the realms of values, ideologies, and aesthetics. The claims on these kinds of knowledge are not clearly falsifiable and debating works poorly in settling people's differences on these grounds. Ideological competition has no clear-cut winner-loser criteria. Ideal-typical ideological competition is also non-coercive in the sense that no one must obey those of opposing belief. Moreover, our understanding of this world and of ideology is always based on idiosyncratic experiences. This means that ideological power is intrinsically pluralistic. Finally, ideology is created for purposes of justification. It is thus a legitimating power.

Ideal-typical political competition (e.g., peaceful elections or factional rivalries are close examples) does have clear criteria for winners and losers, and the strategies associated with it can also be instrumental. Ideal-typical political competition, however, begets little efficiency-driven material production or resource allocation and therefore contributes little to cumulative development.³⁹ In fact, premodern political and ideological actors generally disliked cumulative development because it always destabilized the political and ideological establishment. Likewise, in premodern societies the development of the state (and to a certain extent ideology) was more result than cause of cumulative development.⁴⁰ Like military power, political power is also centralized and coercive.⁴¹ Military organizations are essential for intergroup competition; so are political organizations, but political organizations are needed to regulate in-group competition and cooperation. The regulations, laws, and other public goods that a political organization needs to supply also grant political power a *performance-based legitimacy* that the other three power sources do not possess.

Having laid out the basic characteristics of all four power sources, we can now consider some other impacts these power sources have on historical change. Let us begin with ideological power.

As noted earlier, ideal-typical ideological competition does not induce cumulative development. Ideal-typical ideological competition also patterns historical change in a number of other ways. For instance, since ideological competition

39. This is why more purely political competitions (e.g., palace intrigues and elections) induce less cumulative development than political competitions that also involve other power sources and actors.

40. This is a simplified logic. In the real world once a premodern state has gained power as the result of cumulative development, it becomes increasingly capable of waging wars that trigger further cumulative development and further development of the state. In Tilly's (1975, p. 42) aphorism, "War made the state, and the state made war." The relationship between military competition and state development is dialectical.

41. Mann (1986, p. 27); Poggi (1990, p. 5); Tilly (1992).

affords no clear-cut criteria for winning and losing, in a society rife with ideological competition, instrumental rationality will be suppressed. But since ideological power is noncoercive, one's understanding of an ideological message is intimately related to one's individual experiences. Therefore, it is not only individuals with different social/family backgrounds, interests, or personal characteristics who are likely to adopt different ideologies. Even those who profess the same faith may have very different understandings of that faith. That is why there are many varieties of Marxists, fascists, Christians, and so on, in this world. The prevalence of an ideology or an intellectual figure in a particular time and place always hinges less on the quality of that ideology or the works of that intellectual figure than on (1) direct and indirect support from coercive (e.g., the state, the military) or semi-coercive (e.g., religious establishments, leading universities, major media outlets) power actors,⁴² and (2) people's shared experience of an extraordinary event (e.g., the common experience of World War II or of the Soviet Union's collapse).⁴³ The consensus produced by an extraordinary event, however, will always dissipate sooner than its adherents hope. This is because power actors with different interests will utilize the consensus to reach different goals; because the consensus will have significant unintended social consequences; and because further generations will not have shared the life experience(s) that gave rise to the consensus.

Today, we tend to believe that the "free" competition of different ideas (free in an ideal-typical sense, since real-life ideological competition seldom escapes interference from other powers) allows people to reach consensus, and that in most cases this competition also leads to better ideas. This is, however, an example of the economic-reductionist way of thinking. The free competition of ideas does foster the coexistence of multiple ideas, and makes some of us think more deeply and clearly, but in no way does it ensure that the best ideas will prevail.

Of the four power sources, political power is the one most likely to prevail over the other three. In their ideal-typical forms, both economic power and ideological power are more diffused (or decentralized), and ideological power is reliant on persuasion. By definition, neither can be coercive. Military power *is* by definition coercive. On the other hand, unless a military commander controls a sizable territory, takes over more and more civilian functions, and in general starts to act like a political or state actor, that commander's military power lacks legitimacy.⁴⁴ Political power differs from the other three power sources in that it

42. Revolutionaries know this nature of ideological power well. The leaders of the Young Turks movement, for instance, state clearly: "By propaganda and publications alone a revolution cannot be made" (Üngör 2011, p. 29).

43. When adherents of one ideology defeat the adherents of another in an economic or military competition, both the winners and losers will correlate the victory with the ideology of the victors. That ideology will then prevail. That is how Western ideas and ways of life spread so quickly in the post-World War II world.

44. Finer (1988, chap. 3). Finer argues that, besides lacking a moral title to rule, the military is also unable to manage, with reasonable effectiveness, a highly complicated society whose functioning requires subtle coordination, persuasion, and many noncoercive incentive structures.

is both coercive and emanates from a single center. The need for internal coercion and territorial defense compels a political actor to build an army and learn to control it. The power of the political actors also develops quickly following military conflict because violence favors larger and stronger states.⁴⁵

Historically, military commanders frequently usurped the thrones they had fought to protect, and then found that they had become chiefly political actors and that, as such, were expected to provide public goods to their newly won subjects (e.g., law and order, aid during famines). Political actors, however, were unlikely to become chiefly military actors even if they also controlled the military, because their subjects would remain loyal only so long as some minimal public goods (their needs) were attended to. The need to provide public goods gives political actors a performance-based legitimacy that the other ideal-typical power actors do not enjoy. This is why medieval European kings were able to dominate the church most of the time, even as state power declined after the collapse of the Roman Empire.⁴⁶ Performance-based legitimacy of the state is also the reason why many early modern European thinkers, from Hobbes to Rousseau, defended and promoted state power constrained only by some kind of “social contract.”⁴⁷ In short, despite ups and downs during the past millennia, state power has moved in the direction of vastly increasing dominance over society, frequently at the expense of the other types of social power. The modern state has become such a Leviathan that it has led contemporary philosophers to articulate political theories strongly promoting the roles of nonstate political actors.⁴⁸

Performance, however, is an unstable source of legitimacy because concrete promises raise people’s expectations higher once fulfilled and induce political crises when unfulfilled.⁴⁹ Therefore political actors also must resort to values—ideology, religion, or tradition—to buttress their legitimacy.

The legitimizing function of ideologies lends great importance to the relationship between ideological and political power. Different ideologies lead to different kinds of states, and some ideologies strengthen state power, while others weaken it. This critical insight is expressed clearly in John Hall’s seminal book *Powers and Liberties*.⁵⁰ A caveat must be added, however: ideology is protean in the sense

45. Tilly (1985, p. 175).

46. Strayer and Munro (1970) have given a thorough account on the church’s changing relationships with the state in the Middle Ages, including its struggle to free itself from secular influences during the eleventh century.

47. Rousseau (1997, pp. 61, 119), for example, has argued that the body politic should have “absolute power over its members” because of its unique capacity to provide public goods, and that this absolute power should not be interfered with “unless it becomes incompatible with the public good” (or the general will of the people). Rousseau’s political theory, of course, has been accused of being responsible for the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution and the “totalitarian democracy” of the twentieth century (e.g., Burke 1987; Constant 2003; Talmon 1952).

48. I have in mind Habermas (1984, 1989) and many of his followers.

49. Zhao (2009b).

50. Hall (1986).

that an ideology (or religion or tradition) is capable of continuous metamorphoses in different social contexts, entering into various new relationships with the other power sources that crystallize in new forms. Any assertion of a fixed relationship between political and ideological power will face important exceptions and contradictions. Nevertheless, transcendental ideologies tend to nurture the development of autonomous ideological mentalities and institutions,⁵¹ with which it can be difficult for a state to establish stable relationships. Immanent ideologies, on the other hand, tend to reinforce (or undermine) existing power relations and nurture the development of ideological institutions and mentalities that support (or oppose) the existing political order. The reality is again much more complicated, because many ideologies have simultaneously transcendental and immanent aspects, and are highly mutable.

VALUATION OF PRIVATELY ORIENTED INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALISM AND MODERNITY

Political power enjoys certain primacy over the other three power sources. Marxists, however, attribute to economic power a deterministic primacy in shaping historical change, and this is not entirely wrong. Economic power derives from humans' most elementary needs—food, clothing, and shelter, and the tools to produce these—to sustain life. Economic power is the “base” of existence for all social actors. The price mechanism generated by economic exchange also has a pervasive impact on the behaviors of all individual and collective actors (regardless of the values they hold) and on the structure of society. Economic power and those who predominantly wield it, however, have always had organizational as well as ideological weaknesses, and both weaknesses have historically made economic competition a weak driving force of social change in traditional societies. Unlike military and political actors, ideal-typical economic actors lack the centralized and coercive means to achieve dominance in the webs of social power networks. Equally important, an ideal-typical economic actor expresses itself in an egocentric instrumental manner, unlike ideal-typical political and ideological actors. Yet humans habitually justify their actions by values.⁵² Actions that cannot be justified by values may well be unsatisfying (or less satisfying than expected) to the actor and will certainly alienate the actor's peers. Being intrinsically opportunistic, privately motivated economic actions cannot devise circumstances but can only react to them.⁵³ Furthermore, privately motivated economic

51. Mann (1993, p. 7). According to Mann (1986, pp. 23–24), ideology can generate a more autonomous “sacred” form of authority that transcends all existing social groups, and a socially bounded form of authority that intensifies the cohesion and power of an already-established social group. Different ideologies, of course, put different weight on these two tendencies.

52. Durkheim (1951, 2001).

53. Kalberg (1980, p. 1164).

activities are defenseless in traditional societies against value-based indictments, and in those societies both the moneyman and the moneyed man tend to be despised, unless they can mask their economic activities with value-based rationales.

Scholars have long tried to identify the key features of modernity, and their lists have included industrial capitalism, bureaucratization, secularization, democratization, globalization, gender equality, rationalization, the rise of individualism, and the dominance of instrumental rationality.⁵⁴ Of these, the dominance of instrumental rationality is closest to the mark, because the other features are to some extent secondary or derived. For example, bureaucratic administration, according to Weber, is a central phenomenon of modern society.⁵⁵ Yet bureaucracy was quite well developed in parts of the world long before the rise of modernity,⁵⁶ largely because it could enhance the workings of many different kinds of organizations, including those resolutely antimodern in their values. Bureaucratic administration in itself, therefore, is not a marker of modernity.⁵⁷

I argue that the empowerment of economic power by ideology, which I refer to as *the valuation and domination of privately oriented instrumental rationalism*, is the most crucial feature of modernity. It is a crucial departure from traditional values and traditional economic behavior and a turning point toward modernity.⁵⁸

Industrial capitalism is only one of the most important consequences of the valuation of privately oriented instrumental rationalism. Only when privately oriented profit-making activities are acknowledged to have positive value equal to other societal values can the capitalistic spirit flourish and industrial capitalism develop. Industrial capitalism is a feature of modernity resulting from the valuation and hence the dominance of privately oriented instrumental rationalism.⁵⁹

With the rise and dominance of privately oriented instrumental rationalism came the rise of modern science and of secular ideologies that either justify (e.g., liberalism, social Darwinism) or, more or less, oppose it (e.g., socialism, fascism, nationalism). The rise of industrial capitalism as a consequence of the dominance of privately oriented instrumental rationalism also fostered migration, urbanization, and globalization. The rise of many secular ideologies and power networks (in particular the secularized nation-state) also pushed religions to retreat from politics and become purer manifestations of ideological power, hence the

54. See Adams, Clemens, and Orloff (2005, p. 14); B. Turner (1992, p. 13) for a similar list of the major elements of modernity.

55. Weber (1968, pp. 223–25, 1394–95); Beetham (1974, p. 15).

56. Eisenstadt (1963).

57. Modernity does, however, empower the bureaucratic administration as Weber claims.

58. I stress again that this turning was really a slow process lasting for several centuries (Giddens 1990, pp. 1–10; Hirschman 1977).

59. See chapter 13 for a more detailed discussion of the roles that “the valuation of privately oriented instrumental rationalism” played in the rise of industrial capitalism in the West.

phenomenon of secularization.⁶⁰ Secularization, however, does not mean that religious institutions are unable to adapt to modern conditions. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the growing strength of evangelical Protestantism have demonstrated the highly protean nature of religious doctrines, institutions, and actors, and their potential to gain new supporters.⁶¹

Science is increasingly promoted in the modern world, in part because it justifies and extends the power of privately oriented instrumentalism. Freedom of will and choice and personal achievement are all now positively valued. These changes in values have fundamentally restructured motivations among the affected populations,⁶² which in turn have further reoriented the trajectory of historical change.

The positive valuation and dominance of privately oriented instrumental rationality is the core of modernity. When we humans are able to contain our privately oriented instrumental zeal without reverting to the fetters of traditionalism and totalitarianism, we may be said to have reached an era of postmodernity.⁶³

Privately oriented instrumental rationalism became a positive value in Europe under three mutually reinforcing conditions: (1) the previously interstitially existing merchants gradually acquired political, ideological, and military power (epitomized by the bourgeoisie's domination of city governance) sufficient to hold the pressures of the traditional political and ideological actors at bay and to sponsor and influence "progressive" intellectuals to write essays in support of profit-making activities and bourgeoisie power; (2) the state actors increasingly relied on alliances with merchants for more money, for imperial expansion, and for the management of colonies; and (3) the existence of a well-developed theoretical-formal rationality that supported systematic theorization by intellectuals in which profit-making could be interpreted as a positive value.

Of these three conditions, the first is straightforward and has been masterfully recounted by Hirschman.⁶⁴ The second is more complicated, but the gist of it has been well captured by Polanyi and those scholars who see close links between the state and the bourgeoisie in the making of modern Europe.⁶⁵ In what follows, therefore, I will elaborate on only the third condition.

Theoretical-formal rationality, a cognitive toolkit with the potential to assist in the development of any form of rationality, is most effective in developing instrumental rationalism, particularly privately oriented instrumental rationality.

60. Bruce (2002); Martin (1978); McLeod (2000).

61. Berger (1999); Bradshaw (1998); Smith (1998).

62. Hirschman (1977).

63. Eisenstadt (2000) argues that modernities are multiple. To me, the so-called multiple modernities finding expression in non-Western countries are variations of a single theme, and are largely alleviations of traditional bondages rather than postmodern freedoms.

64. Hirschman (1977). See, in particular, Hirschman's (1977, pp. 56–66) account of how money-making, which had been regarded as avaricious, was promoted by early-modern European thinkers as an act of innocence and a "calm passion," superior to the old passions of the unenlightened past.

65. Polanyi (1957).

Owing to its “value-free” nature, theoretical-formal rationality tends to not overwhelm instrumental rationality. In fact, the two have a natural affinity, because the criteria for determining that a theory is better than others are ultimately based on that theory’s theoretical or empirical utility, or both. Even without this toolkit, a phenomenon seen to have “value” can still develop stunningly, as is demonstrated by the sweeping success of Christianity and Islam in premodern Eurasia. But privately oriented *instrumental* rationality has never been able to shed the pejorative label “opportunism” without first being theorized as a positive value. Such theories as natural law,⁶⁶ individualism and liberalism,⁶⁷ and “the invisible hand” developed by European thinkers aided by theoretical-formal rational tools originating in the Greco-Roman tradition and resurging after the Renaissance, and their importance in furthering the power of the bourgeoisie, certainly attest that Europe’s well-developed theoretical-formal rationality was crucial to the rise of modernity and industrial capitalism, which developed in part as a consequence of modernity.⁶⁸

The actual rise of industrial capitalism in England was a most complicated historical process, in which the attachment of value to privately oriented instrumental rationality functioned as a linchpin. In other words, the valuation of privately oriented instrumental rationality was the most important necessary condition for the rise of industrial capitalism, but it was not a sufficient condition.

Other conditions, especially the technological readiness of society, were also necessary to the rise of industrial capitalism. Industrial capitalism did not emerge in Italian cities during the Renaissance, for example, even though, according to Jacob Burckhardt,⁶⁹ individualism was already positively regarded there.⁷⁰

GEOGRAPHY

Many scholars—myself included—regard the role of geography and environment in history as critically important.⁷¹ Human activities always have a

66. By *natural law theory*, I refer to a broad early-modern European intellectual tradition that derived the bases of social order or international order not from the Christian faith but from the rationally constructed, “unalienable” natural rights of human beings.

67. That is, the pursuit of one’s happiness and interests are inalienable rights of the human being (Locke 1980).

68. Privately oriented instrumental rationalism still faces challenges from both the left and the right. Attaching value to privately oriented instrumental rationalism is, therefore, an ongoing process. See, for example, McCloskey (2006) for a recent attempt.

69. Burckhardt (1958). The premise of Renaissance humanism, that human beings can attain happiness in this world and ought to work hard to achieve such happiness, is distinctively modern in this sense. Again, the development from this Renaissance premise to the origination of “invisible hand” doctrine was far from automatic, even though the earlier ideas had already prepared the ground.

70. See chapter 13, “Market Economy under the Confucian-Legalistic State,” for more discussion of these ideas. In particular, I juxtapose the valuation and dominance of privately oriented instrumental rationality in early-modern Europe with the conditions that made it impossible for industrial capitalism to take root in early-modern China, despite the level of commercialization and urbanization that late imperial China had achieved.

71. For more recent writings on the geographic and environmental impact of human society, see Diamond (1997, 2005); Fox (1971); Genovese and Hochberg (1989); Gourou (1980); Jones (1981); Morris (2010); Rokkan and Urwin (1982).

geographic/environmental dimension. Geographic and environmental conditions shape human competition, and human agency accomplishes its goals by modifying geographic and environmental conditions, whether intentionally or unintentionally.⁷²

I introduce geographical/environmental perspective into the analysis (by discussing rivers, terrains, climate, and weather patterns, etc.) whenever they matter significantly to the research questions that concern me. When there is criticism of a geographical/environmental argument (such as Wittfogel's "oriental despotism" thesis), it is only because the argument is empirically irrelevant. When geographical/environmental conditions are at the center of the analysis, such as in the discussion of the nomad-stationary interactions in chapter 11, it is only because I am examining the conflict of two peoples utilizing distinctive modes of production conditioned by different natural environments. Yet, although the importance of geographical/environmental conditions is not overlooked in this book, I want to stress that history and its almost infinite complexity are driven not just by the geographic and environmental level mechanisms, but also by the structured competition among social actors.

CONCLUSION

This chapter adds a Spencerian element to Michael Mann's theory by identifying the dialectic interactions between competition and institutionalization as the most important driving force of social change. It then postulates that social actors compete in four ideal-typical arenas—economical, ideological, political, and military, which constitute the four sources of power in Mann's theory. I argue that each of these four power sources shapes human competition differently, and that different constellations of the four power sources generate different patterns of historical change. The chapter goes on to map the major characteristics of each of the four power sources and then to deductively probe their impact on history. The mechanisms and patterns revealed in this discussion guide the book's empirical analyses.

The chapter also modified two important Weberian concepts—legitimacy and rationalization. On the question of legitimacy, I develop concepts of performance-based, ideological, and legal-procedural legitimacy to amend Weber's charismatic, traditional and legal-rational legitimation. On the question of rationalization, I criticize Weber's notion that historical rationality is a version of traditional rationality and establish instead historical rationality as a distinctive category of rationality. I disaggregate Weber's instrumental rationality into privately oriented and publicly oriented instrumental rationalities, and

72. Cities, canals, roads, large-scale defense systems (such as the Great Wall), terraced fields, deforestations, and dams are a few major examples.

argue that, although bureaucracy is greatly empowered when privately oriented instrumental rationality dominates in a society, by itself bureaucracy has little to do with modernity, pace Weber. This is because bureaucracy is merely a tool for better realizing the goals of a collectivity, including those that are resolutely antimodern. I also argue that the key to the rise of modernity and industrial capitalism in the West is not the dominance of instrumental rationality and bureaucracy, as Weber envisaged, but the valuation and dominance of privately oriented instrumental rationality in society.

The chapter introduced quite a few new analytic angles and concepts that go beyond Spencer's, Weber's, and Mann's original formulations. The boldness of the theory calls for more systematic theorization, but the empirical nature of this book compels me to expound the theory in a single chapter. Such short shrift certainly does not do justice to its complexity, which I hope to revisit more systematically in future theoretical writings. Moreover, the discussions in this chapter hardly exhaust the possible relationships among the four power sources, even though the general mechanisms developed are sufficient for me to analyze patterns of the Chinese past, to which I now turn.

PART II

The Historical Background of the Eastern Zhou Era

The Western Zhou (ca. 1045–771 BCE) Order and Its Decline

Eastern Zhou politics grew out of the rubble of Western Zhou history. The founders of the Zhou dynasty and its subsequent rulers had created or improvised new ideologies and institutions that would have a great impact on Eastern Zhou's historical development and long-lasting influence on Chinese history. To understand the history of the Eastern Zhou period and Chinese history as a whole, therefore, we must examine the legacies of the Western Zhou political order.

The Zhou dynasty was founded by a confederation of Zhou-Jiang peoples following their overthrow of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1045 BCE).¹ We still know relatively little about the lives of the Zhou people before they ruled ancient China, and much of what we purport to know is guesswork.² We do know that before the Zhou people ruled ancient China, they had already practiced intensive agriculture; cast cauldrons, weapons, and agricultural tools out of bronze; and had close contact with the Shang state, sometimes as an ally, sometimes as an enemy.³ Although the Zhou people and their allies had been expanding their sphere of influence at the expense of the Shang for many years, some historians believe that their final victory was the result of a single battle that was fought at Muye in 1045 BCE.⁴ The Shang army was perhaps the stronger, but internal disaffection led some of the Shang troops to surrender without fighting while others defected

1. Based on the ancient place names in mythological and historical accounts and on archaeological findings, many historians believe that the Zhou people originated in the western part of today's Shaanxi province (Qi 1946; Shi 1952; Yang 1999, chap. 2). Qian Mu (Ch'ien Mu), an eminent historian, however, argues that the Zhou people originated in the Fen River valley in modern Shanxi province and migrated to Shaanxi (Qian 1931). Both views are based on some inconclusive evidence, but each has adherents (Chang 1980, pp. 249–50; Hsu 1994, pp. 33–35). Among Western scholars, for example, Rawson (1999, p. 384) maintains that the Zhou people originated in Shaanxi; whereas Shaughnessy (1999b, pp. 305–7) argues that they migrated from the Fen River valley. For more on the close relationship between the Zhou and the Jiang peoples, see Hsu and Linduff (1988, pp. 55–56); Yang (1999, p. 27).

2. Throughout the book, I use the term “ancient China” to refer to an area within the geographical confines of modern China that was the cradle of Chinese culture and civilization. “Ancient Chinese states” refers to the states that emerged in ancient China after the collapse of the Western Zhou political order. Most of the ancient Chinese states developed from Western Zhou city-states.

3. Hsu and Linduff (1988); Shaughnessy (1999b); Yang (1999, chap. 2).

4. Different dates, separated by decades, have been suggested for the Battle of Muye, but most historians now accept that it took place in the 1040s. The date 1045 BCE is from Shaughnessy (1999b, p. 309).

to Zhou. As a result, the battle lasted only one day.⁵ The last king of the Shang dynasty committed suicide after the defeat.⁶

Western Zhou was still a relatively small state when it overthrew the Shang dynasty. In the founding years of the Zhou dynasty the Zhou population numbered perhaps only between 60,000 and 70,000.⁷ The Zhou rulers also faced serious threats from both ambitious family members and the remnants of the Shang aristocracy.⁸ To cope, the new Zhou rulers took several steps that may have been largely improvisations compelled by historical circumstances. Nevertheless, these measures would have a long-term impact on Chinese history.

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

Following the conquest, the Zhou victors had to contend with strong resentment and resistance from Shang aristocrats. To justify their rule and solicit cooperation, the new Zhou rulers created a political concept called the “Mandate of Heaven,” in which they posited that the Shang rulers had once possessed a sacred mandate bestowed by heaven, but that because of the misrule of the last Shang king and the virtuous conduct of the Zhou rulers, heaven had withdrawn the mandate from the Shang and bestowed it on the Zhou.⁹ There is abundant evidence showing the propagandistic importance of the concept at the time of its creation. One chapter of the *Remnants of Zhou Documents* (*Yi zhou shu*),¹⁰ repeatedly asserted that Zhou, a small state, was able to conquer the more powerful

5. Tradition has it that two years before the battle, King Wu of Zhou (the Martial King) organized an aborted campaign against the Shang involving 800 regional lords at Mengjin. This is unlikely. During the Eastern Zhou period, military conflicts frequently involved more than two states (sometimes as many as fifteen), and it was very common that the states involved failed to follow the battle plans due to the lack of good coordination. *Zuo's Commentary* records that Lu failed to arrive on time for a battle between Zheng, Lu, and Ji on one side and Qi, Song, Wei, and Yan on the other (Huan 13, 699 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 138), and that Lu failed to arrive at the scene of a battle led by Qi because Qi did not notify it on time (Xi 9, 651 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 330). Such examples are manifold. A more believable account is that the Zhou people were aided by eight western states during the Battle of Muye, including Qiang (Jiang), Yong, Shu, Wei, Lu, Peng, Pu, and Mao (Hsu 1994, pp. 92–98; Yang 1999, pp. 483–505). In the foregoing paragraph “Huan 13” means the thirteenth year of the reign of Duke Huan of Lu (r. 711–694 BCE). Entries in *Zuo's Commentary* were arranged chronologically according to the regnal dates of the dukes in the state of Lu.

6. An inscription on a bronze vessel (*li gui*) unearthed in 1975 shows that the battle indeed took place on the day of Jiazi and lasted only a day; this confirms the record in the received texts.

7. Li (1962, pp. 666–69).

8. Shaughnessy (1999b, pp. 310–11); Yang (1999, chap. 4).

9. It has been suggested that the Mandate of Heaven concept was not entirely new at the time; the Shang dynasty had had its own Mandate of Di (Schwartz 1985, p. 46). There is, however, a crucial difference between the Mandate of Heaven and the Mandate of Di. The Shang rulers worshipped Di, the high god at the apex of the spiritual hierarchy, and believed that Di would favor them if they worshipped him piously by following correct ritual procedures (Keightley 1978, pp. 214–15). This differs qualitatively from the idea of the Mandate of Heaven, according to which heaven favored those who followed correct ritual procedures *and also* were good rulers of their people.

10. *Remnants of Zhou Documents* (Huang, Zhang, and Tian 1995, pp. 477–84). The book comprises fifty-nine highly heterogeneous surviving chapters, and is known to have existed by the third century BCE. Many of its chapters originated earlier; a few might have been added during the Western Han dynasty (Shaughnessy 1993).

Shang state because the Zhou rulers had received the Mandate of Heaven. The chapter also says that the Shang aristocrats would be treated well as long as they submitted to Zhou rule, but severely punished if they did not. The Mandate of Heaven also appears frequently in the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*) and the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu*).¹¹ Fu Sinian, for example, found that the Mandate of Heaven is invoked seventy-three times in the twelve Western Zhou documents collected in the *Book of Documents*. Moreover, when the mandate concept is invoked, it is commonly used to assert the legitimacy of new rulers in phrases such as “the Shang replaced the Mandate of Xia”¹² and “the Zhou took over the Mandate from Shang.”¹³

Although the propagandistic purpose of the Mandate of Heaven was clearly directed at the vanquished Shang, the Zhou rulers applied the requirement to be a good ruler to themselves and to their successors.¹⁴ In an early Western Zhou proclamation the Zhou rulers inveighed against the (putative) heavy drinking among the Shang elite, which, they claimed, contributed to that state’s moral corruption and eventual downfall: “We should use people instead of water as mirrors. Now that the Shang rulers had lost their Mandate bestowed from Heaven, why should we not treat history as a mirror and draw a hard lesson from the demise of the Shang state?”¹⁵ Another early Western Zhou document, believed to have been issued by the Duke of Zhou, proclaims:¹⁶ “Heaven had taken away the Mandate from the Shang state and passed it to us, . . . but I cannot count on the Mandate resting with us and will respect the Heavenly Mandate and our people forever. It is all contingent upon human conduct whether or not mistakes and evils will occur. . . . Heaven is not immutable. Heaven will not take away the Mandate that King Wen (the Cultured King) had received just as long as we carry on his virtuous conduct.”¹⁷

The Mandate of Heaven is arguably the single most important political concept devised by the early Zhou rulers. It envisions a relationship between ideological

11. *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*) (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980) contains over 300 poems on multiple subjects, most of which can be dated to between the eleventh century BCE and the seventh century BCE. In the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu*; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980), the twenty-one chapters of “Archaic Script,” or the version that was supposedly discovered in the wall of Confucius’s family estate in Qufu in the late second century BCE (a little over half of the book’s contents), were forged in the early fourth century CE. But the book’s twenty-nine “Modern Script” chapters, or the materials preserved from the Qin dynasty’s burning of books, contain the earliest writings that formed the foundation of ancient Chinese political philosophy. See Nylan (2001, pp. 72–91, 123–36) for the dating of these two Chinese classics.

12. The Xia dynasty is generally believed to be the first Chinese dynasty. Our information about it is scant indeed, consisting only of some mythological accounts and some excavated artifacts dating from that era.

13. Fu (1952, vol. 3, pp. 31–38).

14. Chao (1996, p. 139).

15. *Book of Documents* (“Proclamation on Wine Drinking”; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, pp. 206–207).

16. That is, it is written as a proclamation by Duke Zhou. It is impossible to confirm the authorship of these very early Chinese texts.

17. *Book of Documents* (“Numerous Regions”; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 228).

power and political power and a principle of accountability for the ruler that are very different from what developed in the other world civilizations.¹⁸ Its wide acceptance not only helped to consolidate the power of the early Western Zhou rulers, but also shaped the patterns of Chinese history in the following related ways:

First, at the heart of the concept is the idea that the ruler holds a divine right to rule as long as he looks after the welfare of the people but risks being overthrown if he fails in this duty. Being a good king/emperor entails not only giving orders but engaging in moral conduct, meaning that since the beginning of the Western Zhou time, performance was a very important dimension of state legitimacy in China. Linking performance with the right to rule also means that the king/emperor in China was not absolutely divine, which contrasts sharply with, for example, the European doctrine of the divine right of kings, which asserts that a monarch receives the power directly from God and is subject to no earthly authority nor to the will of his people.¹⁹ Implicit in the Mandate of Heaven is the right of the subjects to overthrow unfit rulers, always a convenient justification for rebellions. Countless peasant rebellions throughout Chinese history claimed this cultural legacy.

Second, as Hsu and Linduff have noted, in creating the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, the Zhou rulers “drew their lesson from earthly, historical precedent rather than from theological or philosophical argument.” Although they proclaimed that their power was mandated by heaven, it was rulers’ good conduct that they actually emphasized.²⁰ This way of thinking was incorporated into the teachings of Confucius and his followers during the Eastern Zhou era, and became the foundation of state legitimacy in imperial China.²¹ Through the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, the Chinese acquired a tradition of humanism and historical rationalism that was distinctly at variance with other traditional societies.²² That tradition was the foundation of a major divergence of Chinese culture from other premodern civilizations.

Third, another key tenet of the Mandate of Heaven was that when heaven is unhappy with a ruler, it will warn him in the form of natural disasters. Ideologically, this mentality facilitated the rise of correlative thinking,²³ which made the Chinese much less interested in discovering causalities in the patterns of relationships of a highly interlocked and complicated world, and was an

18. Eisenstadt (1987, pp. 12–13).

19. Finer (1997, p. 1101).

20. Hsu and Linduff (1988, p. 109).

21. Creel (1970); Shaughnessy (1999b).

22. Wang (2000, pp. 130–32).

23. Correlative thinking refers to a way of logic reasoning that associates image or concept clusters by meaningful disposition rather than causation. For example, if one loses a lot of blood, a Chinese would suggest eating food with red color such as red beans, dates, or animal blood. The power of correlative thinking is in its ambiguity and vagueness, which provide ample room for one to conjure up culturally justifiable claims to serve particular needs.

obstacle to the development of theoretical-formal rationality in China.²⁴ In practical matters, this worldview allowed Chinese rulers and rebels alike to see droughts, floods, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, and so on, as admonitions from heaven. Natural disasters warned the rulers to do better and inspired the suppressed to rebel. In contrast to Shang thinking, for the Zhou “Heaven was no longer a deity, . . . but rather an expression of the cosmic order.”²⁵

A KINSHIP-BASED FEUDAL SYSTEM

The Shang domain consisted of a network of statelets and chiefdoms.²⁶ The Shang king acted as a religious authority and an overlord of the rulers of the local statelets, which were bound to the Shang state by fictive kinship.²⁷ The local statelets maintained a certain level of autonomy while receiving protection from the Shang state. This kind of patron-client relationship, which was quite common in early empires worldwide,²⁸ presented one problem: it was almost impossible for the patron state to retain the loyalty of the client states once its power was seriously weakened.²⁹ Thus, as the Zhou state became stronger, it had not only turned against the Shang, but also attracted many of the Shang’s allies to its side.

The founders of the Zhou dynasty had obviously taken a lesson from the Shang’s single-day demise at the Battle of Muye.³⁰ Not long after they had conquered the Shang, the Zhou rulers dispatched members of the royal lineage and their close allies to establish colonies in strategic locations in the east. Most of the early colonies were established along the axes of the Yellow River and Taihang Mountains; later they were extended to other areas.³¹ The appointed rulers of these colonies were granted various aristocratic titles (for the sake of simplicity,

24. This kind of correlative thinking also found a strong expression in early Chinese literature (Shaughnessy 1999b, pp. 336–38).

25. Vernant (1990, p. 84), in collaboration with Jacques Gernet. The quote is from the part written by Gernet.

26. Most scholars describe the political units of this period as chiefdom-states (e.g., Chang 1980; Keightley 1983; Y. Li 1999, pp. 9–120; Underhill 1991). The political units affiliated with the Shang were, however, numerous. Dong (1953), for example, has counted about a thousand names of various kinds of political units in the oracle-bone records.

27. See Chang (1980, pp. 248–59) and Keightley (1980, 1983) for the relationships between the Shang state and the subordinate statelets and chiefdoms.

28. Mann (1986, pp. 142–46) has an excellent discussion of early strategies of imperial domination and the logic behind their development.

29. Even at the height of his power a king of the Shang dynasty had to travel frequently from one place to another along certain pathways, conducting inspections and ritual sacrifices along the way, to maintain his ties with the subordinate statelets and chiefdoms (Keightley 1983).

30. The following quotes from two famous speeches recorded in *Zuo’s Commentary* reveal the rationale behind the colonization: “Enfeoffing the relatives to protect the house of Zhou” (Xi 24, 636 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 420–25); “King Kang of Zhou (r. 1005/3–978 BCE) ruled the state with a light hand and enfeoffed his brothers to protect the royal house” (Zhao 26, 516 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1475).

31. For the military colonization and the origins of some major city-states during the Western Zhou, see Ge (1992); Ren (2004); and Yang (1999).

I will refer to them uniformly as “dukes”),³² and the titles and privileges were all hereditary. Over time, many of these colonies developed into political entities that some historians call city-states,³³ even though ancient Chinese city-states differed greatly from their ancient Greek counterparts in levels of urbanization and the nature of the polity. I also use city-state to depict these political entities, but will discuss in a great detail the actual nature of these political entities in chapter 3. When the Western Zhou political order weakened, these city-states began competing for dominance, a competition that brought about the Eastern Zhou era.

Many historians describe the Zhou political system as “feudal.”³⁴ The Zhou political order does indeed share similarities with medieval European feudalism: both were hierarchical political structures in which a high-level political authority (the overlord) granted a piece of land, or fief, to an aristocrat (vassal), who enjoyed a certain autonomy in military, legal, and other affairs in the land under his control in return for performing some obligatory service, primarily military, to his overlord.³⁵ Chinese “feudalism” shares these characteristics but differs from its European counterpart in three important ways. In Europe, feudalism developed out of some elements of late Roman and early Germanic societies;³⁶ in Zhou China it was a top-down political imposition of the Western Zhou rulers. Moreover, Chinese feudalism was kinship-based, whereas European feudalism was not. Finally, as Li has convincingly demonstrated, the

32. Historians once believed that the Western Zhou nobility consisted of five ranks, which were considered comparable to the European aristocratic ranking system (duke, marquis, earl, viscount, baron). Yet the five-rank system is not seen in Western Zhou texts such as the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents*, and the Eastern Zhou dynasty did not have a ranking system until the end of the dynasty (Fu 1952, pp. 97–129; Hsu 1994, pp. 161–62; F. Li 2003, pp. 132–35).

33. Lewis (2000a); Yates (1997). The Western Zhou city-states have also been called “village states,” “feudal states,” “segment states,” or “settlement states” (F. Li 2008, chap. 7). Although each of these terms captures some characteristics of the Western Zhou states, I prefer the term “city-state,” which I use to describe a small urban-based polity with a certain level of political independence and a small economically and socially integrated adjacent hinterland. I have adopted this minimalist definition because more expansive definitions of city-states have included such conditions as being territory based, having full political independence, and being the “home of liberty and democracy.” That is those conditions that only ancient Greek and some early modern European city-states satisfy (Burke 1986, p. 137; Charlton and Nichols 1997, p. 1; Griffith and Thomas 1981). Recently specialists in non-Western societies have begun to criticize and abandon various concepts of Western origin and replace them with local terms. To facilitate comparisons between cases and dialogues with specialists in other civilizations, this book will try to preserve once widely accepted concepts by adopting minimalist definitions and treating each definition as an ideal type representing a wide range of phenomena that share core similarities. More details on this point will be given in my discussion of the concept of feudalism in this chapter.

34. Creel (1970, chap. 11); Granet (1964, chap. 2); Hsu and Linduff (1988, pp. 150–53); Fairbank and Goldman 2006, pp. 39–40); Wheatley (1971, pp. 118–22). Loewe (1965, p. 50) questions the existence of a European-style feudal system in Zhou China. Shaughnessy almost never uses the word *feudalism* to describe the Western Zhou political arrangement, and when he does, he tends to put it in quotation marks (Shaughnessy 1991, 1997, 1999b).

35. The obligations and relations between lord, vassal, and fief formed the basis of European feudalism, according to Ganshof (1964).

36. More specifically, feudalism in Europe developed out of the personal patronage system under the late Roman Empire and the Germanic war-band, and matured during the High Middle Ages with European military expansion (Bartlett 1993; Finer 1997, vol. 2, chap. 5).

Western Zhou political arrangement was not marked by a vassal-lord, largely private, homage ritual as was European feudalism.³⁷ When the Zhou king met with local rulers on ceremonial occasions, the relationship between them was more like that between ruler and subject than between lord and vassal. Yet within their own domains the local Chinese rulers enjoyed more autonomy than their European counterparts.³⁸ For these and other reasons Li suggests that we use the Chinese term *fengjian* rather than “feudalism” to characterize the Western Zhou political arrangement.³⁹ The term *fengjian* contains two Chinese characters. The character *feng* literally means to enfeoff, and the character *jian* means to establish and to develop. *Fengjian* has been a phrase that the Chinese use to depict the described political format.

Li's assertion that the term “feudalism” was not applicable to the early Chinese context and his preference for *fengjian* is well taken. In this book, however, I shall nevertheless characterize the Western Zhou political order as “feudal.” In fact, I shall consistently use concepts of Western origin (e.g., feudalism, the city-state) to denote ancient Chinese institutions (e.g., *fengjian*, *guo*). This practice goes against recent trends in scholarship and has met with objections from several China historians who read earlier drafts of this book. I must acknowledge that these objections are fully justified. These Western concepts were created to depict European phenomena. They impose inaccuracies on my depictions of Chinese institutions. On the other hand, using Western terms to discuss Chinese institutions has advantages if by redefining these terms as ideal-types we point up the commonalities of the corresponding European and Chinese institutions.⁴⁰ Moreover, using the same concept to depict similar institutions across cultures facilitates comparison, revealing how similar institutions were improvised and developed in different contexts.

I have three reasons for retaining the term *feudalism*. First, the practice of homage differed in different times and places in medieval Europe.⁴¹ Thus, from a deconstructivist position, one could argue that feudalism is also an inadequate concept for the European system as well.⁴² Second, the term *feudalism* continues to be widely accepted in both Western and Chinese scholarship to describe the

37. See Bloch (1961, pp. 145–62) for a classic account of the vassal homage ritual.

38. F. Li (2003).

39. F. Li (2003, p. 143). Recently, F. Li (2008, pp. 294–98) has proposed a new concept, “delegatory kin-ordered settlement state,” to characterize the nature of the Western Zhou regional state. I endorse Li's characterization, but I do not use the concept in this book for two reasons. First, localized concepts tend to be more precise, but are less useful for comparative and analytical purposes. Second, this book covers a much longer period than Li Feng's. By the time of the Eastern Zhou era, most Western Zhou colonizers had long been indigenized, no longer fitting the label “settlers.”

40. See chapter 1 for the concept of ideal type.

41. Reynolds (1994).

42. The use of the term *feudalism* to characterize medieval European society has been criticized (e.g., Reynolds 1994). Reynolds's attack on the traditional understanding of feudalism is powerful, and has greatly added to our understanding of the complexity of medieval Europe. Yet, she offers no better alternative.

Western Zhou political order.⁴³ In fact, the word *feudalism* has been and still is translated into Chinese as *fengjian*,⁴⁴ the term that Li regards as a better substitute. Unless we create a totally different concept, to use *fengjian* to substitute for feudalism may only increase confusion. Finally, I use the term *feudalism* in this book to characterize a political system in which each hierarchical political unit has considerable political autonomy in law making, war making, and taxation and possesses other political powers that in modern nation-states belong exclusively to the state. The three main differences between the European feudal system and the Chinese *fengjian* system, which many scholars have pointed out, do not really undermine this minimalist definition. Feudal arrangements in both China and Europe were highly conducive to interlocked and prolonged warfare among the states. And warfare, as we have noted, was crucial for the quick rise of publicly oriented instrumental rationality, efficiency-oriented culture, and a pattern of cumulative development in traditional societies.

Western Zhou colonization was somewhat similar to the colonization of the Frankish aristocracy during the High Middle Ages. Its effects on the history of China, like the effects of Frankish colonization on European history,⁴⁵ were manifold.⁴⁶ The colonies protected the Zhou ruling house and prolonged its existence long after the collapse of the Western Zhou dynasty.⁴⁷ It established a uniform writing system among peoples of different linguistic backgrounds.⁴⁸ Finally, it facilitated the formation of a system of lineage law, which had a profound impact on Chinese history. Before turning to lineage law and its historical significance, let me address the roles of the Chinese writing system in history.

Chinese is not an alphabetic language. In an alphabetic writing system, such as Arab, Latin, or Greek, the symbols used generally represent specific sounds,

43. For the Chinese sources, see Hsu (1994).

44. Chinese historians have used the word *fengjian* in two broad senses. Marxist historians have used the term to characterize the political system and mode of production of almost the entire period of imperial China. Non-Marxist historians, however, tend to use the term to refer to the Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou political systems. Since the 1990s more and more Chinese historians have used the concept in the non-Marxist sense. See Feng (2006) for an excellent review of different usages of the concept by modern Chinese historians.

45. During the High Middle Ages, the Frankish aristocracy expanded across Europe and established numerous new states or statelets. By the Late Middle Ages about 80 percent of Europe's kings and queens were Franks (Bartlett 1993, p. 42). Unlike the early Chinese military colonization, however, the medieval European military expansion involved very different types of competing actors from the very beginning. The highly heterogeneous nature of the Frankish colonizers created a rich diversity of cultures and societies and fostered the rise of the chartered towns and commercial cities that were crucial to the rise of modernity (Bartlett 1993, pp. 309–11).

46. See Huang (1986); Xu (1985); and K. Yang (1984) for discussions of Zhou military colonization, its purpose and historical significance.

47. During the Eastern Zhou era, a hegemonic state that originated from the Zhou dynasty city-state system needed to establish its legitimacy among the other states by acting as a protector of the Eastern Zhou ruling house, which sustained the Zhou dynasty's political relevance and allowed it to linger on for roughly another 500 years after the collapse of the Western Zhou political order.

48. Military colonization spread not only written Chinese but also the corresponding spoken language. By the second century CE, people in north and northwest China, Sichuan, and even as far south as today's Yunnan province mostly spoke a common language with only minor differences in local accents (Lee 1978, p. 36).

tying the written language closely to the spoken one. Therefore alphabetic writing systems are easier to learn for those who know how to speak the language. Yet in an alphabetic writing system, the greater the variation in the pronunciations of different regions, the more likely these pronunciations will result in modified spellings and thus different written vernaculars and intellectual traditions. In other words, without modern education and communication networks to act as standardizing agents, an alphabetic writing system tends to fragment cultures and identities. The Chinese writing system based on Chinese characters is more difficult to learn than an alphabetic writing system. On the other hand, most Chinese characters, though pronounced differently in different regions, carry identical meanings.⁴⁹ This allows people of quite different regional dialects to read a text and understand it in the same way, something that greatly facilitated communication in premodern China.⁵⁰ Post-Eastern Zhou Chinese history shows that, although imperial Confucianism provided the ideological foundation for a unified elite culture,⁵¹ it was the Chinese writing system that supplied an infrastructure for the spread and perpetuation of that culture.⁵²

LINEAGE LAW

To control the states established by military colonization and to regulate the relationships among them, the Zhou dynasty ruling house set up a system of ranked authorities based on patriarchal principles.⁵³ It is what many historians have called the *zongfa* system, or “lineage law.”⁵⁴ Traditional Chinese historiography tends to credit the creation of Western Zhou rituals and lineage law to the Duke of Zhou, one of the founding members of the Western Zhou political order.⁵⁵ Recent archaeological findings, however, show a gradual process of formation, not stabilizing until

49. For instance, the Chinese character 鬼 (ghost) is pronounced as *gui* by Beijinese and *ju* by Shanghainese.

50. My reasoning is influenced by Innis’s analysis of the patterns of communication mediums and the nature of empires (Innis 1950).

51. Loewe (1994) contains a discussion of how written Chinese, in conjunction with Confucianism, fostered China’s cultural and political unity.

52. The cultural dimension of state infrastructure, such as a unified elite culture, a common written language, and an accepted base of state legitimacy, is regarded here as a state’s “infrastructural software” (Zhao 2001).

53. In addition, the Zhou rulers also dispatched “overseers” (*jian*) to supervise and control the enfeoffed city-states. The famous Guo and Gao lineages in the state of Qi, frequently mentioned in *Zuo’s Commentary*, were sent by the Zhou rulers to Qi for this purpose. For the existence of “overseers” in other states as revealed in archaeological sources, see Guo (1960) and Li (2006, p. 113).

54. For various reasons (for example, a specific branch of a lineage was sent off for a military task or a given lineage grew too big), a lineage could split into several branches. By giving more power to the Major Lineage (i.e., the branch which held genealogical seniority), lineage law regulated the relationships between different branches of the same lineage after the split. See Du (1979, p. 27) and Hsu and Linduff (1988, p. 147) for the formation of lineage law.

55. Both *Zuo’s Commentary* (Wen 18, 609 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 633–36) and *Grand Historian* (“History of Zhou”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 132) credit the Duke of Zhou with the establishment of the rites and rituals associated with lineage law. Gu (1979) sees such records as no more than legends, but most Chinese historians tend to believe the account (Chen 1993; S. Yang 1984; Yang 1986).

what some archaeologists have called the “late Western Zhou ritual reform.”⁵⁶ Although the rituals associated with lineage law were never implemented as fully as the descriptions in such ancient texts as the *Book of Rites (Liji)*⁵⁷ and the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial (Yili)*,⁵⁸ few scholars deny that lineage law was an important Western Zhou political institution and that, by the Eastern Zhou era, lineage law and its associated ritual practices had become a crucial part of ancient China’s political culture.

Under lineage law power was allocated among the Zhou ruling house, the heads of the local states, and lesser aristocrats based on their positions in the patriline. Essential to understanding lineage law are the concepts of Major Lineage (*dazong*) and Minor Lineage (*xiaozong*).⁵⁹ The Zhou king, who was supposed to be succeeded by the eldest son of his primary wife, was the head of the Major Lineage.⁶⁰ The appointed rulers of the city-states (many of whom were descended from younger sons or younger brothers of the Zhou kings) were heads of Minor Lineages relative to the Zhou ruling house, but the heads of Major Lineages in their own territories.⁶¹ During the Zhou dynasty the lineages frequently split so as to create a single lineage of a size at which direct acquaintance and control by the lineage authorities was still possible. Moreover, lineage law was not always based on true kinship. Under lineage law enfeoffed aristocrats who did not have kinship ties with the king or dukes would also accept the royal or ducal family as the Major Lineage and their own as Minor ones.⁶² This kind of Major-Minor lineage relationship, therefore, could be multiplied and extended to incorporate various real or constructed collateral lines. These formed a multilayered hierarchical structure, with each layer reproducing the power structure of the royal

56. According to Z. Yang (2001, pp. 90–95), rituals of lineage law did not become systemized until the time of King Mu of Zhou (r. ca. 956–918 BCE). Rawson (1999) even calls the development of Western Zhou rituals in this period a “revolution.” Falkenhausen (2006, pp. 48–50) summarizes the following changes in the styles and types of Western Zhou bronze ritual objects that indicated a “ritual reform”: (1) the transformation of the Shang-derived animal décor into “pure ornament,” which indicated changes in the conceptualization of the vessels as well as in their ritual use; (2) the disappearance of the wine vessels that had been common among tomb bronze assemblages from the Shang through mid-Western Zhou dynasties; (3) the institution of standard sets of vessels correlated with ranks according to strict sumptuary rules; (4) the appearance of new types of bronze vessels with simple décor, which might attest to a desire to simplify the ritual and to link ritual to everyday practice.

57. Reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* (1980).

58. Reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* (1980).

59. They are also sometimes called trunk and branch lineages.

60. Li (2006, p. 112).

61. Primogeniture was regarded by some earlier Chinese historians as the core of Western Zhou lineage law. This view first appeared in the texts compiled by Western Han Confucian scholars, such as the *Book of Rites* and *Gongyang’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980) (*Gongyang’s Commentary* hereafter), but it has been now largely discredited by later scholarship (Wu 1984).

62. In the unearthed Houma covenants, the sentence “We exalt the Major Lineage of Jin’s ducal house” appears several times (*Henan Wenwu Yanjiusuo* 1983). We know that the participants in the events were members of the Zhao lineage, one of the most powerful lineages in Jin. We also know that the Zhao lineage did not have blood-based ties with the ducal house. Yet, the sentence in quotation indicates that the members of the Zhao lineage still considered the ducal house to be their Major Lineage.

or ducal house on a lesser scale, according to its kinship distance from the king or duke.⁶³

Under lineage law, it was not only the authority of the local rulers that was ranked according to their real or fictitious blood relationship with the Zhou ruling house; this kind of ranked relationship was also reinforced by a complicated set of rites performed on various occasions, including (but not limited to) ancestral sacrifice, appointment ceremonies, marriages, funeral, tribute, music, and dress codes. Under the system, the way the dead were buried reflected their place in the kinship heirarchy.⁶⁴ Only the eldest son of the Major Lineage had the right to hold ancestor worship ceremonies; in ceremonial proceedings Minor Lineages could not play the kinds of music the Major Lineages were permitted to play; the ritual objects used to furnish the tombs of the dead, too, differed according to their ranks (which usually reflected an aristocrat's relationship to the royal lineage),⁶⁵ and when members of the Major and Minor Lineages came together on ceremonial occasions, they had to follow the protocols reflected in the lineage law. Many more examples can be easily adduced.⁶⁶

The development of lineage law profoundly shaped the patterns of Chinese history. In most traditional societies the state was a private entity belonging to the royal lineage, and the state and royal family were one entity.⁶⁷ Under lineage law, however, not only was the state the private domain of the royal family, the whole political order as well as all sociopolitical relations were seen as originating from lineage principles and organized on the basis of lineage. Lineage law raised the importance of family in Chinese culture to a level that, together with the Mandate of Heaven ideology, injected a new kind of religiosity into Chinese culture.

The religiosity of the people in the Shang dynasty was in several ways similar to that of other early civilizations. They worshipped ancestors, a plethora of nature gods and Di (the high god), and practiced divination to confer with these divine forces about almost every decision they made.⁶⁸ In Shang religion, the

63. According to Falkenhausen (2006, p. 67), such a split naturally "created a hierarchy based on kin seniority and genealogical distance from the focal ancestors."

64. Chinese archeologists found that the spatial layout of the cemeteries, the design of the tombs and kinds of burial goods in the archeological sites dating from middle to late Western Zhou, all closely follow the accounts in the received texts (Hsu and Linduff 1988, pp. 166–71), which suggests that the political order prescribed by lineage law may have been broadly applied at the time. Recent archeological findings also shed much light on the debates among historians. For instance, historians once debated the number of horses (whether four or six) used to pull the chariot of the Zhou king. In 2002, archeologists unearthed a tomb in Luoyang belonging to an Eastern Zhou king and found a chariot pulled by six horses. Such findings immediately ended the debate.

65. As for the bronze cauldrons that were used in a king or aristocrat's funeral and then placed in his tomb, the *Rites of Zhou* and several other ancient texts mention that kings merited nine; rulers of the city-states (dukes), seven; ministers (*dafu*), five; the *shi* (the lowest rank aristocrats), three. Archaeological findings so far match most of these prescriptions (Hsu and Linduff 1988, p. 193).

66. See Yang (1999, pp. 426–79) for an extensive discussion of lineage law and the rituals associated with it.

67. Adams (2005); Weber (1968, pp. 1007–10).

68. Chang (1980, pp. 202–3); Eno (2009); Hsu (1994, p. 99); Keightley (2000).

ancestors, the nature gods, and Di constituted three systems that were largely unrelated to each other. Although ancestor worship accounted for the majority of divinations and sacrificial rituals recorded in the unearthed oracle bones,⁶⁹ ancestors did not outrank the nature gods and Di, and always, the purpose of ancestor worship was to receive some kind of immediate intervention.

Things started to change after the introduction of the Mandate of Heaven. As noted earlier, the Zhou leaders propagated the belief that they had a mandate to rule, not because they were able to invoke the magical power of the gods, but because they ruled virtuously. In the religion of Western Zhou, heaven did not possess magical powers as had the Shang dynasty gods. A similar change also occurred in the practice of ancestor worship: the Shang people worshiped ancestors to invoke miracles, but for the Zhou people, the purpose of ancestor worship was mainly to reinforce this-worldly social relations centered on lineage law.⁷⁰ The difference between Shang and Zhou religiosity is well summarized by a passage in the *Book of Rites*:⁷¹

The Shang rulers honored the gods, and they led their people to serve the gods. They respected the ghosts highly and gave rites a low priority. . . . The Zhou people honored rites and stressed the importance of good conduct. Although they also respected the ghosts and gods, they tended to keep a distance from them.⁷²

During the Eastern Zhou era, when war-driven social change swept away much of the Zhou political order, Chinese philosophers of the time, in particular those whom we today regard as more or less Confucian, often drew inspiration from idealized lineage law in theorizing the bases of a good society. Their writings were later codified into imperial Confucianism.⁷³ Confucianism became a major Western Zhou legacy.⁷⁴

69. Chao (1990).

70. Liu (1989) found that, of the twenty words used to describe different ancestor worship rituals in the inscriptions on unearthed Zhou bronze vessels, seventeen also appear on the Shang oracle bones. Based on this and other evidence, recent scholarship has emphasized the continuities between the Shang and Zhou dynasties (e.g., Y. Liu 2004). In my view, since the Zhou state was once subordinate to the Shang, it naturally adopted many Shang elements into its own culture. Nevertheless, the continuity in the vocabulary used to describe ancestor worship could also be superficial. To use a modern analogy: the Communist regime in China established after 1949 is very different from the Nationalist regime that preceded it. Yet both regimes had inherited the zeal for modernization and the Leninist mentality, and thus the phrases and concepts they used in ceremonies and rituals (such as during party conferences, on national holidays, and on the deaths of important individuals) show considerable similarity. Scholars comparing these two regimes several thousand years from now with few available sources besides the phrases and concepts used on the two on ceremonial occasions could very well conclude that the post-1949 Communist regime and pre-1949 Nationalist regime were much the same.

71. Notwithstanding that the *Book of Rites* originated much later, what is expressed in this passage has been confirmed by recent archaeological studies of the ritual system of early China (Y. Liu 2004, chaps. 4–6).

72. *Book of Rites* (“biaoji 32”; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 1642).

73. It must be noted that the advance of “Confucianism” during the Eastern Zhou era did not bring about a decline of other traditions in Chinese religiosity (Harper 1998; Yates 1995).

74. Liang (1996); Yang (1992, p. 279).

THE EMERGENCE OF BUREAUCRACY

I define bureaucracy in standard Weberian terms, that is, as a system of administration in which tasks are performed according to prescribed rules. Bureaucracy has the following four characteristics: (1) it is hierarchically structured; (2) its operation follows rules and procedures rather than the orders of a person; (3) it selects and promotes officials based on their performance; (4) it compensates its officials with a salary.⁷⁵ This is an ideal-type definition. Few real-life governing bodies exhibit all these exact characteristics. Premodern bureaucracies always violated one or more of the above stipulations. Most modern bureaucracies also have aspects that do not meet the definition. Leadership style, for instance, is important even in the most rigid modern bureaucratic organizations. Moreover, many bureaucratic governing bodies have elected heads and most of the officials ranking just below the head are appointed based not on past performance within the bureaucracy but by their closeness to the head. In all probability, no ideal-typical bureaucratic government has ever existed. When I argue for the rise of bureaucracy in ancient China, I do not argue for the rise of an ideal-typical bureaucracy, but simply a governing body containing a significant number of elements of the ideal-typical bureaucracy.

As early as the Qin and Western Han dynasties, China boasted what was by far the largest and most complicated bureaucratic system of government in the world (more on this in chapter 9). When exactly did this bureaucracy originate, and what accounted for its early origin? Kiser and Cai argue that the terrible and prolonged wars during the Eastern Zhou era contributed decisively to the origin of bureaucracy in ancient China.⁷⁶ I have stated elsewhere that, although Eastern Zhou warfare was material to the bureaucratization of the Chinese states, the relation between the two was less straightforwardly causal. More specifically, although Eastern Zhou China was afflicted by incessant wars for over five hundred years, during the first three hundred years most were small-scale clashes.⁷⁷ By the time warfare became prolonged and implacable, after the mid-fourth century BCE, China had already experienced two waves of bureaucratization, during the seventh century BCE and then between the end of the fifth and the middle of the fourth century BCE. Since the “dependent variable” of an event cannot occur before the “independent variable,” this deadly, prolonged warfare could not have “caused” the bureaucratization process.⁷⁸ My earlier assertion, consistent with the consensus among most present-day historians, saw bureaucratization beginning

75. Weber (1968, pp. 956–1005). These are also the criteria that Kiser and Cai (2003) used to distinguish bureaucracy from other forms of governance.

76. Kiser and Cai (2003).

77. See Lewis (1990) for discussion of the highly ritualistic and small-scale nature of warfare during the early Eastern Zhou era.

78. Zhao (2004).

in the seventh century BCE. Kiser and Cai deny this. Here, I should like to point out that even the seventh century BCE bureaucratization was not the earliest occurrence of bureaucracy in China. During the mid-Western Zhou period, long before the Eastern Zhou declined into endemic warfare, the system of government in the domain directly controlled by the Western Zhou kings was already becoming increasingly bureaucratic.⁷⁹

Many China scholars have noted various bureaucratic elements in the Western Zhou governing body.⁸⁰ Creel stresses that the Western Zhou government's practice of keeping written records is an important feature of a modern bureaucracy.⁸¹ Hsu and Linduff assert that over time the Western Zhou government increased in size and division of labor, and that there was an institutionalization of royal authority and hierarchy.⁸² Shaughnessy argues that the Western Zhou government became clearly bureaucratic in the course of the mid-Western Zhou period.⁸³ Were these developments in the Western Zhou government a simple outgrowth of the administrative structure of a patrimonial state, or a genuine emergence of a bureaucracy?⁸⁴ The question is important because when a patriarchal household grew large and complex, some kind of "administrative structure" would naturally develop.⁸⁵ To address this question, let us evaluate the nature of Western Zhou administration against the four criteria of Weberian bureaucracy. The following discussion is mainly based on Feng Li's seminal work.⁸⁶

Li, by examining the inscriptions on sixty-seven unearthed bronze vessels, which recorded Western Zhou appointment ceremonies, shows that by the mid-Western Zhou period, the governmental administration consisted of three distinct functional divisions: the royal household, civil administration, and military. The records on these bronze vessels also show that there was a protocol for the appointment ceremonies: the proceedings were routinely attended by the appointees' superiors; they always took place in the offices used for particular administrative tasks; even the Zhou king's conduct during the ceremonies was prescribed.⁸⁷ In other words, the operation of the Western Zhou government met the second criterion of Weberian bureaucracy, at least during the appointment proceedings. Li also finds that, as the Western Zhou government developed, it became routine for appointees to start their governmental careers very young, at a junior level, and then follow a lengthy, slow, and in some cases complicated path of

79. Besides establishing colonies ruled by royal relatives and by their close allies, the early Western Zhou rulers also directly controlled a royal domain (*wangji*) in the Wei River valley and the Chengzhou region.

80. Chang (2007, p. 39); Creel (1970); K. Yang (1984; 1999, pp. 315–35).

81. Creel (1970, pp. 123–29).

82. Hsu and Linduff (1988, p. 249).

83. Shaughnessy (1999b, pp. 325–26).

84. See Adams (2005, pp. 16–19) for a discussion of the concept of the patrimonial state.

85. Eisenberg (1998, p. 85).

86. F. Li (2001/2002, 2004, 2008).

87. F. Li (2001/2002).

advancement through various government divisions (experience in the military being a plus), finally achieving a high rank, perhaps the highest in a given division.⁸⁸ This indicates that the Western Zhou government was hierarchical, with layered ranks of officials. And, as Li has very convincingly argued, if this was “the normal pattern of promotion, experience and personal performance would have been considered very important factors in the government service of the Western Zhou.”⁸⁹ In this supposition we have the first and third criteria of Weberian bureaucracy.

Weberian bureaucracy being an ideal-type, even the bureaucracies of modern states do not fully meet all the Weberian criteria, as noted earlier. Therefore, it seems profitable to set aside the ideal-type and analyze the process of bureaucratization and bureaucratic consolidation in its actual historical setting and thereby perhaps understand the Western Zhou bureaucracy as the rudimentary beginning of a slow bureaucratization process in early China. In the government of Western Zhou, official positions were open only to aristocrats. There is no indication that appointed officials were paid a salary; instead, they were given estates and received occasional gifts from the king.⁹⁰ The Western Zhou bureaucracy also operated under the lineage law framework and was clearly a patrimonial bureaucracy (to use the precise Weberian terminology).⁹¹ Regardless of the terminology used, it is easy to see that the Western Zhou bureaucracy contained several essential features and was the direct forerunner of the state bureaucracy that developed during the Eastern Zhou era and matured over the course of Chinese history.

It must, however, be stressed that bureaucracy developed only in the region directly controlled by the Western Zhou royal house, not in the city-states outside the royal domain.⁹² We know very little about how the city-states were managed during the Western Zhou period. However, we do know that in the early Eastern Zhou era, all the major city-states were still run by aristocracies under some kind of patrilineal arrangement. In other words, when the Eastern Zhou era began, most city-states had not yet acquired the bureaucratic tradition of the Western Zhou royal domain. But the Western Zhou bureaucratic model could easily be emulated. Some of the city-states that expanded their territory in the seventh century BCE, during the Eastern Zhou era, also initiated bureaucratization.

88. F. Li (2004).

89. F. Li (2004, p. 18). One appointment inscription spells out very clearly that the king appointed a person named Mian (Mien) to the post of Minister of Works after examining “his record of performance” (Hsu and Linduff 1988, p. 251).

90. F. Li (2001/2002, p. 53).

91. Weber (1951).

92. F. Li (2008, p. 255). The Western Zhou royal domain was a relatively small region. Given the size of ancient China and the limited monitoring capacity of the Western Zhou state, it is hard to imagine that the Western Zhou government could have extended the royal domain bureaucracy to the city-states. For discussion on the relationship between rulers’ administrative capacity and the type of administration that rulers choose, see Becker and Stigler (1974); Kiser (1994); Kiser and Cai (2003, pp. 514–15).

We also still know very little about what was behind the emergence of bureaucratic governance during mid-Western Zhou. Because most of the inscribed bronze vessels record the appointments of lower-level military “captains,” Shaughnessy suggests that bureaucratic development might have begun in the military and then been extended to the civil administration.⁹³ Western Zhou bureaucratization, however, started at a time when the Western Zhou government does not seem to have been experiencing a major increase in warfare. Weber observed that governing a large territory entails complicated administrative tasks and stimulates a state’s bureaucratic development.⁹⁴ But, as noted earlier, Western Zhou’s royal domain was quite small, mainly limited to the Wei River valley in present-day Shaanxi province.

I suspect that the Western Zhou bureaucracy had its origin in China’s strong patrilineal tradition. This hypothesis may seem odd, because according to Weber the universalistic and achievement-oriented bureaucracy is the antithesis of the particularistic, ascription-oriented, kinship-based organizations.⁹⁵ Yet in the real historical setting of early China, it is possible that the two antitheses reached a synthesis. First, to maintain the relationships between the central government and local city-states according to the lineage law ideal, the Western Zhou government institutionalized frequent large-scale sacrificial rituals accompanied by complicated and rule-guided proceedings that reflected the lineage order. The hierarchical nature of lineage law and the complicated sacrificial rituals naturally lend themselves to bureaucratic organization.⁹⁶ Ritual sacrifice was one of the two central functions of the state at the time.⁹⁷ Bureaucratized sacrificial activities would have been bound to have had an impact on the structure of government organizations, and could have contributed to bureaucratization. Moreover, Western Zhou lineage law extended real or figurative kinship relations to a very large circle of people, from the rulers to a large number of city dwellers. The size of these lineages not only made the hierarchical division of labor a necessity, but also left plenty of room for the development of merit-based selection of officials among lineage members, which would also have contributed to the emergence of a bureaucracy.

Perhaps reflecting the family-oriented beginning of Chinese bureaucracy, most Western Zhou official titles were based on the names of household roles, and these were retained in the Eastern Zhou and Western Han bureaucracies.⁹⁸

93. Shaughnessy (1999b, pp. 325–26).

94. Weber (1970, p. 209).

95. Weber (1968, pp. 956–1069).

96. Keightley (1978) makes the same point in his analysis of the relationships between Shang religion and the state.

97. The other major function of the state was war. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Cheng 13, 578 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 861) contains a very famous statement attributed to Duke Liu Kang: “Sacrifice and warfare are the two most important tasks of the state.”

98. See Bu (2002, chap. 3) for the Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou impact on the Western Han bureaucracy.

For instance, in the Western Han dynasty the chancellor was called *chengxiang*, or alternatively *zaixiang* in some other dynasties. Here, *xiang* meaning “assistant,” and *zai* meaning “butcher.” Slaughtering animals was one of the most important components of the ritual sacrifices, which were crucially important to the royal and ducal families during both the Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou eras. Therefore, the title *zaixiang* came to be applied to the person who assisted his lord in the most important affair of the household.⁹⁹ The same was true for the titles of the Western Han ministers. For example, the minister known as the Grand Coachman (*taipu*, recently translated into “superintendent of transport”) was in charge of everything transportation-related, including horses used by the military and to draw imperial carriages. *Taipu* literally means “king’s chauffeur,” which is what it designated when it originated in the Western Zhou bureaucracy.¹⁰⁰ *Fengchang* was the title of the person in charge of ritual activities associated with ancestor worship and other lineage activities during the Western Zhou period. In the late Eastern Zhou and Han dynasties, this office acquired a new name, *taichang*, the “superintendent of ceremonial.” According to Qian Mu, seven of the nine Western Han ministers carried titles originating not with state affairs, but with the official’s responsibility for the royal or ducal families’ private lives. Chinese states were thus “households turned states.”¹⁰¹

CITY DWELLERS AND COUNTRY DWELLERS

In Western Zhou and early to mid-Eastern Zhou periods,¹⁰² most of the inhabitants of a territory were identified as either “city dwellers” (*guoren*) or “country dwellers” (*yeren*; also known as “rural folk” or “rustics”).¹⁰³ Historians frequently debate the nature of these two groups in Zhou China.¹⁰⁴ This section discusses their nature because understanding them will enable us to better understand the relationship of the state and society at the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period.

Living in, or in the immediate vicinity of, a city,¹⁰⁵ the city dwellers were mostly descendants of the Zhou and Shang.¹⁰⁶ In a new city-state, the core members of city dwellers might have been aristocrats and other people of their lineages who

99. Qian (Ch’ien Mu, 1982, p. 6).

100. Bu (2002, p. 54); Qian (Ch’ien Mu 1982, p. 8).

101. Qian (Ch’ien Mu, 1982, p. 8).

102. Chapter 3 proposes a tripartite division of the Eastern Zhou era: the Age of Hegemons (770–546 BCE), the Age of Transition (545–420 BCE), and the Age of Total War (419–221 BCE). The three historical ages roughly correspond to the early, middle, and late Eastern Zhou periods referred to in this chapter.

103. Du (1990); Hsu and Linduff (1988, p. 163); Tong (1980, pp. 132–46); Yang (1999, chap. 4).

104. Chao (2000); Cheng (1983); Du (1990); He (2001, pp. 35–41).

105. Not everybody who lived in the cities and their suburbs enjoyed the status of city dwellers. For example, although the Western Zhou economy was not based on slave labor, slaves did exist in urban areas. They were not considered city dwellers.

106. For example, *Zuo’s Commentary* (Ding 4, 506 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1537–40) records that when military colonization had just started, the Zhou court forced some Shang and Huai people to migrate to the states of Lu, Wey, and Jin. A few China scholars believe that the Shang who were forced to relocate constituted the city-states’ country dwellers (e.g., Xu 1985), but most China specialists do not take this view.

had helped to establish the colony.¹⁰⁷ But since the lineages continually split, the composition of the city population became increasingly diverse over time. By the Eastern Zhou period, only a minority of the city dwellers were aristocrats.¹⁰⁸ Except for the Western Zhou royal house, most city-states during the Western Zhou period did not have standing armies, and so the city dwellers were obliged to fight during times of war.¹⁰⁹ This obligation, in addition to the aristocratic origins of the core members of city dwellers, also carried privileges. Although we know little about the lives and activities of the general populace during the Western Zhou period, we do know that during the early Eastern Zhou period,¹¹⁰ city dwellers (in theory) had the right to receive an education,¹¹¹ and that they sometimes participated in political processes.¹¹² Following are some examples of the political power that the city dwellers possessed before the late Eastern Zhou period. All are from *Zuo's Commentary*.¹¹³

(1) When an important decision was to be made, the head of the state might consult with the city dwellers:

In 645 BCE (Xi 15),¹¹⁴ the state of Jin defeated Jin and captured its duke (Duke Hui of Jin, r. 650–637 BCE). When Duke Hui was released and returned home, he summoned the city dwellers to the area outside his palace. He asked his minister to give gifts in his name to all who came and to tell them: “Although I was lucky enough to be able to return home, I have brought humiliation on you. You should choose a good day by divination and [on that day] let my heir take my position.”

In 494 BCE (Ai 1),¹¹⁵ it is recorded that the state of Chen was forced to take sides in a war between Wu and Chu. Duke Huai of Chen (r. 505–502 BCE) summoned the city dwellers to a meeting, at which he asked those present to stand on the right if they wanted him to side with Chu and on the left if they wanted him to side with Wu.

107. For example, it is recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* that Jin annexed several cities from Zhou in 636 BCE (Xi 25; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 433–34), but the people in one city (Yangfan) refused Jin's order. In response Duke Wen of Jin attacked the city. During the siege Cang Ge, possibly the head of Yangfan, communicated with the Jin army and told them: “Virtue should be used to harness the Chinese states and punishment to deter the barbarians. Yet you have brought troops to attack us. No wonder we are unwilling to submit to your rule. Here in the city everybody is a relative of the Zhou king. How dare you try to coerce them?” The story ends with the Jin troops allowing all the inhabitants to leave the city before they entered it. Here, based on the sentence “Everybody is a relative of the Zhou king,” it is easy to infer that many dwellers in that city thought of themselves as belonging to the royal lineage.

108. In *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 17, 556 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1031–32), there is an account of Hua Chen, a Song aristocrat, killing Hua Wu, the chief retainer of another Song aristocrat. One winter day, “the city dwellers were chasing a mad dog. The mad dog ran into Hua Chen's house and the city dwellers followed it in.” Hua Chen took this as an indication of their anger over the killing and fled to the state of Chen. To us, chasing a mad dog in the street does not sound like something high aristocrats would do. It might indicate that the majority of the city dwellers mentioned in this passage were not aristocrats.

109. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhuang 16, 678 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 203) records that the Zhou king ordered Jin to establish one army division. This is the first record of a dukedom with a standing army.

110. The distinction between city and country dwellers disappeared by the late Eastern Zhou period (see chapter 7).

111. Yang (1999, pp. 402–3).

112. Chao (2000); Du (1990, p. 39); Tong (1980, pp. 140–46).

113. See Tong (1980, pp. 140–46) for a much more complete list of cases.

114. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 360–62).

115. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1607).

(2) The city dwellers could criticize their leaders publicly.

In 638 BCE (Xi 22),¹¹⁶ an army led by Duke Xiang of Song was defeated by the state of Chu. Duke Xiang was wounded, and all his bodyguards were killed. When he came back to the capital, “the city dwellers of Song all blamed Duke Xiang for his poor leadership.”

In 538 BCE (Zhao 4),¹¹⁷ Zichan (d. 522 BCE), the chief minister of the state of Zheng raised military taxes, and the city dwellers vilified him: “His father died on the street. His venom is as toxic as a scorpion’s tail. Yet he now rules the country. What is the future of our country?”

(3) The city dwellers took sides in ducal succession struggles, and their role seems to have been crucial:

In 616–615 BCE (Wen 11–12),¹¹⁸ it is recorded that the city dwellers in the state of Cheng disliked the heir apparent. When the old duke died, they chose the new duke for themselves, and the heir apparent had to flee to the state of Lu.

In 542 BCE (Xiang 31),¹¹⁹ it is recorded that the duke of the state of Ju was very cruel and that the city dwellers hated him. The duke selected his son Zhanyu as his heir apparent, but later retracted his decision. With the assistance of the city dwellers Zhanyu rebelled against his father, killed him, and took over the throne.

(4) The city dwellers took part in power struggles among the aristocrats, and their partisanship could be decisive:

In 546 BCE (Xiang 27),¹²⁰ a brawl broke out among members of the Cui lineage in the state of Qi. One of the brawlers ran to Qing Feng for help.¹²¹ Qing Feng arrived with members of his lineage to attack the Cui lineage but failed in the attempt. Qing Feng turned to the city dwellers, and with their help, defeated the Cui lineage. In the end, the members of the Cui lineage were massacred.

In 554 BCE (Xiang 19),¹²² it is recorded that the city dwellers in the state of Zheng hated their heavy-handed chief minister, Zikong. To protect himself, Zikong mobilized a private army from members of his household and those of two of his associates. But with the help of the city dwellers, Zizhan and Zixi, another two Zheng ministers, were able to attack and defeat Zikong’s private army, kill Zikong, and divide up all of his land and property.

These examples show clearly that the city dwellers enjoyed a kind of political power that the Chinese public lost after the Legalist reforms in the Age of Total War (see chapter 7). It is this power that leads many historians to see city dwellers

116. *Zuo’s Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 397).

117. *Zuo’s Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1254).

118. *Zuo’s Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 579–92).

119. *Zuo’s Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1189).

120. *Zuo’s Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1137–38).

121. Qing Feng was a Qi minister and great grandson of Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–643 BCE).

122. *Zuo’s Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1050).

as freemen or citizens with nascent constitutional rights,¹²³ and their capacity to influence political processes as “a glorious tradition” that was lost during the Warring States period.¹²⁴ This view, however, contains some biases.

Citizenship has been defined in various ways. One widely accepted definition, offered by T. H. Marshall, is that “citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.”¹²⁵ According to this definition, city dwellers were not citizens. During the Western Zhou and early Eastern Zhou eras, almost all city dwellers belonged to one of the lineages, and were under the control of the lineage head. They were bound by blood relations and considered themselves, and acted as, units of an ensemble rather than as individuals possessed of free will. They were also bound together by the hierarchical lineage law and its associated rites and obligations. When a duke or a king sought their opinions before making an important decision, they were summoned and came as members of blood-based lineages, and their opinions did not always count (unlike the ancient Greek “citizens” or “freemen,” who, with their own power and non-blood-based associations, could act to defend their own interests).¹²⁶ In actions such as removing a duke or killing a hated aristocrat, they were usually led by aristocrats of their own lineage.¹²⁷ In other words, it is more likely that they were pawns of the aristocrats of their lineages more than independent actors in a political process. That they were fellow lineage members of the aristocrats and were closely involved in city-state politics shows that the Chinese state at the time was not separate from the lineage and the family, a point

123. Cheng (1983, p. 2); He (2001, p. 61); Hou (2003, pp. 200–205). For example, Lewis (2000a, p. 369) calls the city dwellers “citizens.” Hui (2001) claims that the city dwellers had “nascent constitutional rights.” Du (1979, p. 83) once referred to the city dwellers as “the free peasants.”

124. Du (1979, p. 133). Du does say in his analysis that the city dwellers could not be seen as citizens. Yet he uses the positive phrase “glorious tradition” to portray them as one of the “3 power actors” in the ancient China city-states, the other two being the duke and the aristocrats.

125. Marshall (1964, p. 84). According to Aristotle, the essence of Greek citizenship was the right to make judgments and to hold office, to rule and to be ruled in turn (Morris 1987, p. 3). This Aristotelian notion of citizenship was very similar to Marshall’s definition.

126. The two examples that I have used to illustrate how the city dwellers were consulted when important decisions were made have been widely cited by historians who want to stress the city dwellers’ political power. But those historians usually omit the full story: In my first example, the duke’s apparent deference was just a political trick. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Xi 15, 645 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 360–62) in full records that Duke Hui summoned the city dwellers at the suggestion of Lu Sheng, one of his ministers. After being captured and released by Qin, Duke Hui’s reputation was shattered. Lu Sheng told the duke that he could regain his authority only by publicly gifting the city dwellers and pretending that he was going to resign in recognition of his mistakes. The duke did exactly what Lu Sheng suggested, and it produced the intended effect. Obviously, the city dwellers were not summoned to make a real decision, as some historians have argued. The second story does not mention that what determined the decision of Duke Huai of Chen was not the number of people who moved right or left, but the suggestion made by a minister who stood neither on the right nor the left but in the middle, in front of the duke. The minister had advised the duke to keep close with Chu rather than tilt toward Wu, and the duke followed his suggestion.

127. Tong (1980, p. 346). Based on a fairly thorough summary of the city dwellers’ political activities, Tong also argues that, although the city dwellers did occasionally stage rebellions without the leadership of major aristocrats, such rebellions were always very small in scale.

I shall return to in the next chapter. The lineal closeness between the state and its people both empowered the city dwellers and delimited the extent of their power.

The foregoing analysis shows that city dwellers' blood-based relationship with the aristocrats of their lineage and with the ducal house gave them a certain power, but their power was also severely limited by their subordinate position in their relationship with the lineage head. Other than blood-based relations, did the urban public possess any other sources of political power? Du Zhengsheng has claimed that the city dwellers *were* independently empowered, because (1) the dukes needed them to fight in times of war, and (2) all city dwellers were tightly organized into "largely autonomous" (i.e., free from the control of the aristocrats) organizational units called *li*, which functioned as bases from which they exercised their power.¹²⁸ Most early China historians agree with Du's first point.¹²⁹ A story in *Zuo's Commentary* is highly illustrative: Duke Yi of Wey was very fond of cranes.¹³⁰ He liked cranes so much that he gave them aristocratic titles. When the Di people attacked Wey,¹³¹ the city dwellers refused to fight for the duke, saying, "Let the cranes fight. When cranes are honored with ranks and titles, how are the people able to fight?" The second part of Du's argument, however, is questionable. As Du also acknowledges, the *li* were not independent groups, but were kinship-based and controlled by their respective aristocracies.¹³² Archaeologists have unearthed two bronze vessels with inscriptions that give us a glimpse into the nature of the *li*. The first inscription records that the Zhou king awarded a *li* district to a person named Da, and the second records the sale of a *li* district by one person to another. In other words, the city dwellers of the *li* could also be awarded or sold like property.¹³³ As a dependent administrative system, the *li* did have not have functions and rights similar to those of a modern civil society.

But the city dwellers did have a passive power that most historians have overlooked—if bullied, they could escape. Before pursuing this escape hatch, we must first learn what we can about the nature of country dwellers during the Western Zhou and early Eastern Zhou era. We know very little about these people. The bronze inscriptions mentioned by Li mostly record the ceremonial activities of

128. Du (1979, pp. 40–45).

129. Chao (2000); He (2001, p. 37); Yang (1999, p. 402).

130. *Zuo's Commentary* (Min 2, 660 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 265)

131. Di were people of non-Zhou origin who migrated into ancient China from the north during the Western Zhou period. They were herders with a lifestyle very different from that of the ancient China natives. The Di people posed a threat to many northern Chinese city-states during the early Eastern Zhou, and were largely naturalized during the late Eastern Zhou period (Di Cosmo 1999a).

132. Chao (2000, p. 66).

133. F. Li (2008, pp. 181–82). In *Zuo's Commentary* (Cheng 2, 589 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 807) there is also a story that when the state of Chu attacked Lu, Lu agreed to give Chu a hundred carpenters, a hundred tailors, and a hundred weavers as a peace deal. These were entirely city dwellers of Lu. During the Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou periods, there were many instances in which city dwellers were granted to other parties by the aristocrats who controlled them. Some city dwellers who were given away as gifts could be quite rich, judging by the property they owned (Yang 2004).

the aristocrats, and the more credible received texts, such as *Zuo's Commentary*, mainly recorded what happened in the cities. Yang Kuan has written extensively on country dwellers based on his study of the *Rites of Zhou*. The *Rites of Zhou*, however, could not have been composed during the Western Zhou or early Eastern Zhou era;¹³⁴ it is concerned more with an ideally designed political system based mainly on Warring States societies.¹³⁵ Du Zhengsheng summarizes what he sees as the differences between the city dwellers and country dwellers based on evidence from a broader range of sources,¹³⁶ but much of his core evidence on the status of the rural folk also derives from the *Rites of Zhou*.

Because of the paucity of substantive evidence, the position of the country dwellers has been the subject of much debate. Earlier views, such as that the country dwellers were slaves, have been altogether discredited.¹³⁷ The present consensus among historians is that, in contrast with the city dwellers, the rural folk (1) were not obligated to fight in wars or to join a standing army, (2) did not have the educational and political privileges that the city dwellers enjoyed, and (3) had to pay a higher proportion of their crops to the state. These characteristics have led many historians to conclude that city dwellers had a higher social status than country dwellers. My reading of the received texts support the view that the country dwellers were not required to fight in wars and did not have political or educational privileges. What is more difficult to ascertain is whether the country dwellers paid a higher proportion of their crops to the state, for, again, most of the evidence for this is from the *Rites of Zhou* and thus may only reflect the conditions during the late Eastern Zhou era.

Do the first two differences cited above mean that the city dwellers had higher status than the country dwellers? Historians have generally answered this question in the affirmative, based largely on the city dwellers' education and other "privileges." But this reasoning does not take into account the historical context, implying as it does that the city dwellers and the country dwellers lived under the same state system. They did not. When the colonies (or the beginning of the city-states) were first set up during the early Western Zhou period, they were universally tiny, comprising only the walled cities and the land in the immediate vicinity.¹³⁸ Even by the beginning of the Eastern Zhou era, when the city-states had had existed for several hundred years, the large city-states may only have been about one-third

134. The origin of the *Rites of Zhou* generated heated debate in premodern China for both scholarly and political reasons (Boltz 1993, pp. 25–29). It is now widely accepted that the *Rites of Zhou* could not have been compiled earlier than the Warring States period (i.e., the late Eastern Zhou era). It depicts an idealized political system imagined by Warring States scholars, but nevertheless reflects many elements of the Western and Eastern Zhou political order.

135. Cheng (1983).

136. Du (1979, pp. 79–84).

137. For the earlier views, see Guo (1954); Hou (2003, pp. 54–57); Jian (1988, pp. 264–68). For criticisms of the earlier views, see Du (1979, pp. 84–92); Shen (2002, pp. 219–31); and Xu, Si, and Yang (1995, pp. 778–83).

138. Shi (1986, p. 52). Gu (2005, p. 2), for example, has argued that some city-states at the time were as tiny as villages.

of the size of Sparta.¹³⁹ On any map of China in the early Eastern Zhou era, drawn to scale, these city-states would appear as sparsely scattered dots.¹⁴⁰ As they expand, the dots become bigger and more of them appear on the map.

Nevertheless, until the mid-Eastern Zhou period, even in the highly populated regions, there were still areas not ruled by any state.¹⁴¹ This does not mean that they were unpopulated, but rather that the people who lived in those places were either not controlled, or were barely controlled, by the city-states. Some of these people may have lived as pastoralists, others as wandering hunter-gatherers. We cannot say that these people had a lower status than the city dwellers, for they lived in two separate worlds. We cannot even say that the city dwellers must have had a better life than any of these ungoverned country dwellers because, as Sahlins suggests, the hunter-gatherers actually lived, by their own standards, a life of leisure and plenty.¹⁴² Both the pastoralists and the hunter-gatherers could have been categorically regarded as country dwellers by those who lived under the Zhou political system.¹⁴³

Evidence that directly supports my argument is scant (because the country dwellers seldom entered historical records), but it is clear that the country dwellers mentioned in some sources were not under the direct control of a state. *Zuo's Commentary*¹⁴⁴ relates that Duke Jing of Qi (r. 547–490 BCE), having contracted malaria, remained ill for a whole year. For their failure to bring about his recovery, he wanted to kill the Chief Diviner and Scribe. Yanzi, Duke Jing's chief minister advised against it. The following speech is credited to Yanzi:

The trees in the mountains are *now* guarded by Henglu. The reeds in the wetlands are *now* managed by Zhoujiao. The bushes in the wilderness are *now* under the control of Yuhou. The salt and clams are *now* administered by Qiwang. The country dwellers are *now* all brought under the control of the government. The checkpoints near the capital *now* tax people heavily. The hereditary ministers *now* force the people to sell goods to them (presumably at prices set by the ministers).¹⁴⁵

139. Lewis (2000a, p. 364). At its peak, around 500 BCE, Sparta between 20,000 and 35,000 free residents, plus numerous dwellers around.

140. Keightley (1983, p. 548) provides a similar picture in his analysis of the Shang state.

141. An account in *Zuo's Commentary* (Ai 12, 483 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1673) reveals that a large area between Zheng and Song was still uncontrolled by either state when Zichan (d. 522 BCE) was Zheng's chief minister.

142. Sahlins (1974). It must be stressed that, as the city-states turned into territorial states during the late Eastern Zhou period, social relations previously outside the control of the states were either "caged" into the state system or pushed out to the margins.

143. In general, people always know much more about the culture they regard as "advanced," while neglecting those that they consider "backward." The Greeks labeled all non-Greek speakers barbarians, which shows their lack of interest in differentiating among them. Note also that Third World societies tend to be more familiar with American society than Americans are with Third World societies.

144. In Zhao 20, 522 BCE; reproduced in Yang (1990, pp. 1415–18).

145. Henglu, Zhoujiao, Yuhou, and Qiwang in this passage were all low-ranking officers in charge of the said duties.

Yanzi's point was to exonerate the diviner and the scribe and lay the blame where it belonged: on heaven's displeasure with the duke's heavy-handed and tight-fisted rule. Besides illustrating the rise of a style of reasoning (discussed in full in chapter 4), this passage also reveals the *previous* conditions of country dwellers in Qi: like the trees in the mountains and the reeds in the wetland, the country dwellers were at one time not controlled by the state.

Zuo's Commentary gives us one bit of evidence on the life of country dwellers about a century before the lifetime of Yanzi.¹⁴⁶ According to the *Commentary*, while in exile, Prince Chong'er of Jin (the future Duke Wen of Jin, r. 636–628 BCE) and his subordinates once asked some rural folk for food but were given a clod of earth instead. The prince wanted the givers lashed for their "impudence." One of his subordinates prevented the lashing by telling the prince that the earthen clod offered by the country dwellers symbolized the land, and by offering the clod of earth they were actually telling the prince that he would return to Jin and become duke. This may or may not be true. Overtly at least, the rural folk showed disrespect to a prince, and that act of disrespect indicated their political freedom. *Zuo's Commentary* relates a few stories in which Duke Wen revenged himself on several dukes and ministers of lesser states who had insulted him during his exile but nowhere mentions any later revenge on those rural folk. Most likely, in the Age of Transition (545–420 BCE) country dwellers still lived in a world that state power could not reach.

In *Grand Historian*,¹⁴⁷ another story, nearly contemporary with that of Chong'er, relates that about three hundred country dwellers in the Qi Mountains (in present-day Shaanxi province) stole some fine horses belonging to Duke Mu of Qin (r. 659–621 BCE) and killed them for food. Duke Mu's warriors captured the thieves and brought them to the duke to receive their punishment, but instead of punishing them, the duke gave the captives wine and then released them. Later, in 645 BCE, Duke Mu was wounded and cornered during a battle with the state of Jin. Those three hundred rustics, as a unit, came to his rescue and saved his life. The country dwellers in the story were not part of the Qin army and did not have to fight. They were also apparently not under the control of any state at the time. But judging from their rapid mobilization and their effective coordination in attacking the Jin army and saving Duke Mu, these must have been quite large groups not under the control of the two powerful states in the area, the Qin and Jin.

What do we learn from these tales? First, that the alleged different social status of the country dwellers vis-à-vis the city dwellers tells us nothing about the former. Rather, the term "country dwellers" is best understood as a very loose category, comprising various groups of people that differed in their

146. In Xi 23, 637 BCE; reproduced in Yang (1990, p. 406).

147. *Grand Historian* ("History of Qin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 189).

degrees of contact with the inhabitants of cities. Those who lived closest to the city-states were perhaps incorporated into the state system;¹⁴⁸ those who lived farther away were still, in the seventh century BCE, largely outside state control. Second, between the Western Zhou and mid-Eastern Zhou periods, country dwellers was a changing concept. By the late Eastern Zhou, when some city-states had become large territorial states, each controlling multiple cities and sizeable hinterlands, the country dwellers living in these more or less populated hinterlands were gradually caged¹⁴⁹ into the states.¹⁵⁰ Thus, both city dwellers and country dwellers were transformed into subjects of the territorial states.¹⁵¹ The differences between the city dwellers and the country dwellers gradually disappeared. Put another way, the *Rites of Zhou* might be telling us that by the late Eastern Zhou period, more people and land had been incorporated into the state system, or, it might reflect the wish of late Eastern Zhou politicians to incorporate the country dwellers into the state. Third, before the late Eastern Zhou period many country dwellers were still not incorporated into the states, which suggests that the city-states must have dealt lightly with the country dwellers around them. Otherwise, those country dwellers would likely have taken what Hirschman has called the “exit” option,¹⁵² that is, they might have migrated to areas that no state could reach them. Fourth, that there were still so many places that no city-states could reach also meant that the exit option that country dwellers enjoyed was also available to the city dwellers. There are numerous cases of aristocrats escaping to the countryside when they felt at risk, for whatever reason, in their city-states.¹⁵³ If aristocrats could do that, so could the general city populace. Therefore Western Zhou city-states could not have been overly despotic.¹⁵⁴ Returning to the question asked earlier—what was the source of passive power

148. *Book of Documents* (“Bishi,” reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 255) records that the duke ordered the inhabitants of “the 3 environing territories and the 3 tracks” to prepare war material. Some historians have regarded these people as country dwellers (Yang 1998, p. 151). Regardless of their status, these people certainly lived very close to the Lu capital and were very much within the reach of state authority (F. Li 2008, pp. 170–73).

149. Mann (1986, chap. 3) uses a caging metaphor to depict how the fertile alluvial plain formed an “ecological cage” to attract many people to stay and cultivate it. This ecological cage in turn, according to Mann, had facilitated the rise of private property, civilization, and the state (i.e., a political cage).

150. Such caging should not be overstated. For example, it is recorded in *Grand Historian* (“Biography of Prince Mengchang,” reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2363) that Prince Mengchang’s household included 3,000 guests, many of whom had left their home states for whatever reasons.

151. From this point on, I use the term “subjects” instead of city or country dwellers to describe people living in a state, where the differences between city and country dwellers had decreased, and/or where the inhabitants of a state were subject to administration.

152. Hirschman (1970).

153. For example, *Zuo’s Commentary* (Zhao 20, 522 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1408–1409) relates that Wu Yuan, a Chu minister, farmed in remote areas in order to avoid capture by King Ping of Chu (r. 528–516 BCE). *Zuo’s Commentary* (Xiang 27, 546 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1138) also records that Shen Xianyu escaped to Lu’s hinterland after staging a failed rebellion in Qi.

154. Chirot (1985) also emphasizes the importance of the exit option (as the result of Western Europe’s fragmented state system) in limiting the states’ capacity to completely dominate society and in preserving the European pluralistic tradition.

enjoyed by the city dwellers?—it becomes obvious that during the Western Zhou period and into mid-Eastern Zhou it was not very hard to slip out of the political cage, a point that most historians have missed.¹⁵⁵

OTHER WESTERN ZHOU LEGACIES

During the Western Zhou period, all the cities originated as colonies. This means that cities during the Eastern Zhou period originated not as economic nodes but as military and political centers. Under the Western Zhou and early Eastern Zhou framework, the cultivated land controlled by the city dwellers was collectively owned. Tradition had it that the land was arranged into a square of about forty acres. This square was evenly divided into nine sections that resembled the Chinese 井 (*jing*, “well”). The sections were then allocated to eight families. Each family farmed a peripheral unit, and together they cultivated the central unit for the ducal house as way of paying taxes.¹⁵⁶ This static description of the Western Zhou land system has by now been largely refuted;¹⁵⁷ yet, all scholars agree that neither money nor a clear concept of private land ownership existed during the Western Zhou period. Marxist historians have depicted the Western Zhou as a slave society;¹⁵⁸ but recent studies have demonstrated that few of the groups that Marxist historians called “slaves” actually were slaves.¹⁵⁹ Slavery did not exist on a large scale during the Western Zhou period, and most slaves did not work the fields.¹⁶⁰ Unlike the economy of Rome, the Western Zhou economy was not based on slave labor.

Skill in casting bronze vessels and making other handicrafts reached an extremely high level during the Western Zhou and continued to be perfected during the Eastern Zhou period.¹⁶¹ Archeological evidence thus far shows that these vessels were almost all made in workshops owned and run by the state or by major aristocratic families.¹⁶² But *Zuo's Commentary* clearly reveals the existence of artisans and merchants during the early Eastern Zhou period,¹⁶³ and it

155. As Shen Yue (441–513) wrote, “With the burden of tax and corvée, poor people . . . found life intolerable. Many fled to the Man regions [in Hunan and Hubei provinces]. Since the Man people did not have to perform corvée and paid no tax, . . . the total number of . . . households in the region cannot be known” (quoted in Lee 1978, p. 37). This makes it clear that until the fifth century CE, south China still provided refuge for people who fled from despotic political rule. Meanwhile, I must also add that the cost of such an exit option increased as the land available to flee to became poorer and more remote.

156. This description of the well-field is based on *Mengzi* (“Deng Wengong shang”; reproduced in Yang 1980, p. 118).

157. Cui (1984); Jian (1988, pp. 230–35); Tian (1985).

158. Guo (1954); Jin (1983); Lü (1934).

159. Du (1979, pp. 84–92); Huang (1984); Si (1978).

160. Xu, Si, and Yang (1995, p. 318).

161. Rawson (1990); So (1995).

162. For the archaeological discoveries of the state-owned workshops and their vast scale, see Qu (1985, p. 6) and Xu, Si, and Yang (1995, pp. 634–39).

163. Examples will be discussed in chapter 7.

is unlikely that they emerged suddenly, with no Western Zhou tradition behind them.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it is safe to say that a Western Zhou city-state was a tightly organized political community. The economic base of the early Eastern Zhou era was elementary indeed. It is instructive here to compare Eastern Zhou China with premodern Europe. In Europe, even before military competition gained momentum in the second millennium CE,¹⁶⁵ powerful economic actors centered in the independent and semi-independent cities had already appeared.¹⁶⁶ In other words, the historical dynamism of Europe during the second-millennium CE was generated by both military and economic competition; in China it was initially driven only by military competition. As discussed in the introduction and again in chapter 1, economic competition tends to decentralize social power, whereas military competition centralizes social power and in the long run stimulates the development of state power vis-à-vis other aspects of social power.¹⁶⁷ These mechanisms were to shape the pattern of Eastern Zhou history.

The Western Zhou aristocrats saw to it that their children were educated. Young men learned rites, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and arithmetic.¹⁶⁸ By the mid-Eastern Zhou period, as aristocratic power waned, some educated people started to earn their living by offering private tutoring and by writing essays on bamboo strips expressing their views on Eastern Zhou politics. Education and its manifestation in teaching and writing stimulated the formulation of Chinese philosophical thinking and its later coalescence into separate or distinctive “schools.” Since the founders of those “schools” had mostly been trained and then had taught, within the Western Zhou aristocratic educational system, the coherent philosophies that emerged during the Eastern Zhou era bore a strong Western Zhou imprint (see chapter 6).

THE COLLAPSE OF THE WESTERN ZHOU ORDER

After three hundred years the Western Zhou order collapsed. Most premodern Chinese historians attributed the collapse to a succession of unfit rulers and the consequent loss of the Mandate of Heaven. Modern-day hindsight reveals more secular reasons. Over time, the blood relations that linked most of the city-states weakened. Moreover, the Chinese climate entered a cold phase that lasted for over two hundred years, till the beginning of the Eastern Zhou era.¹⁶⁹ During this phase,

164. In fact, archaeologists have found quite a few handicraft tools in Shang dynasty tombs. The occupants of these tombs have been identified as lineage members rather than as artisans in state-owned workshops. In other words, there were artisans who were not in the employ of the state as early as the Shang dynasty (*Zhongguo shek-eyuan kaogusuo Anyang gongzuodui* 1979).

165. McNeill (1982); Tilly (1992).

166. Baechler (1975); Hall (1996, p. 56).

167. See also Hall (1996, pp. 55–56) for an excellent discussion of the relationship between empire and economy.

168. Yang (1999, pp. 664–84).

169. Zhu (1972).

herders and other nonagricultural populations from the steppes migrated southward into northern China.¹⁷⁰ These nonagricultural populations were not the formidable mounted warriors of later invasions, nor did they seem to have the military might to achieve a conquest. They arrived in China perhaps more as immigrants than as invaders. Upon entering China, however, each group established some kind of state system of its own and participated in ancient Chinese interstate politics by intermarrying with the Western Zhou aristocrats, allying themselves with various city-states for defensive or offensive purposes and commingling their cultures with that of the Western Zhou people.¹⁷¹ Over time, the non-Chinese states along with some southern Chinese states that had always been more independent of the Western Zhou state system (in particular the state of Chu) acquired technological and organizational know-how from the Zhou people and gained the military upper hand. This contributed to the Western Zhou decline.

Western Zhou's decline was gradual. From a very limited number of available sources, we know that the Western Zhou's "western six armies" were annihilated, King Zhao (r. ca. 977–957 BCE) died in a battle with Chu, and that the Zhou court was under increasing military pressure from Chu and the "northern barbarians."¹⁷² We also know that tension between the Zhou court and the city-states had been on the rise since the mid-Western Zhou period.¹⁷³ Finally, in 771 BCE a joint force of *Quan Rong* ("Dog Barbarians") and two of Zhou's vassal states (Shen and Zeng) sacked Zongzhou (the western capital) and killed King You (r. 781–771 BCE).¹⁷⁴ A year later, protected by the armies of several major ducal states, the Zhou ruling house migrated eastward to Chengzhou (their eastern auxiliary capital, the present-day Luoyang).¹⁷⁵ Immediately, King You's son, King Ping, was

170. Hsu (1994, pp. 67–70, 287–92).

171. For the close relationship between the "northern barbarians" and the Zhou people, see Hsu (1994, pp. 287–92).

172. Based on the received texts as well as the bronze inscriptions, Yang (1999, pp. 549–76) lists twenty-six major battles between the Western Zhou court and other states. Of these, eleven were fought with "northern barbarians," ten with "southern barbarians," three with the state of Chu, and two with other states. The southern barbarians were mostly fought early in the Western Zhou period whereas ten of the eleven battles with the northern barbarians took place during and after the reign King Mu of Zhou, suggesting that the threat posed by the northern barbarians increased over time. Of the three encounters between the Western Zhou court and Chu, decisive victories were won twice by Chu, indicating that Chu was also a major threat to the Western Zhou court.

173. F. Li (2008, p. 35).

174. *Grand Historian* ("History of Qin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 179).

175. At the beginning of the Western Zhou period, the Zhou ruling house, in an effort to exercise more effective control, established an eastern capital, Luoyang, about 350 kilometers east of their original capital in the Wei River valley (known as the "western capital"). The strategic importance of Luoyang is immediately obvious: it is located at the intersection of the Yellow River and Luo River, with the Funiu Mountain Range to its south, which makes it a highly protected place. Yet, west of the eastern capital there is a long corridor of land running between the Yellow River, Funiu Mountains, and Qinling Mountains that provides access to the Wei River valley, the home base of Western Zhou. The river system made communication between the two capitals particularly easy: warriors and supplies could be quickly transported downstream from the western capital to the eastern capital along the Wei River–Yellow River waterway. In front of the eastern capital and across the Luo River is the vast Central Plain of China, which extends to the Taihang Mountain in the north, the sea and Tai Mountain in the east, and the Dabie Mountain and Huai–Yangzi River system in the south. The entire heartland of ancient China was at Luoyang's doorstep.

installed as the new king, and thus began what we call the Eastern Zhou period.¹⁷⁶ The Eastern Zhou court would exist for another five hundred years or so, over which time its authority over the city-states gradually melted away, leaving the Zhou house only a small domain around Chengzhou over which they could truly be said to rule. With the final evanescence of the Western Zhou order, a new historical phase emerged—the city-states, roughly a hundred fifty in total at the beginning, started to compete for dominance.

Many Western Zhou legacies had a direct impact on later Chinese history. But the legacies of the Western Zhou period answer only some of the questions posed in this book. Western Zhou culture bore no trace of the ultrarationalistic and Legalist ideas that became dominant during the late Eastern Zhou period. The Western Zhou mentality and political system were rudimentary in comparison with the sophisticated philosophies and elaborate bureaucratic government that developed between the late Eastern Zhou period and the early Western Han dynasty. Yet in the Western Zhou order we can see the creation of a set of structural-cultural conditions that shaped the nature and outcome of Eastern Zhou's endemic warfare.

SUMMARY

This chapter summarizes Western Zhou history from its origin to its decline. Three pivotal institutions of Western Zhou origin exerted an enduring impact on the history of China: the Mandate of Heaven, the kinship-based “feudal” system, and lineage law. The Mandate of Heaven concept, which originated as the early Zhou rulers’ justification for their overthrow of the Shang state, endured as a foundation of state power, widely accepted among Chinese rulers, the elite, and the people. The dominance of this political concept made government performance one of the most important bases of state legitimacy.¹⁷⁷ Correlative thinking, historical rationalism, and religions characterized by a sense of immanence, which flourished throughout premodern China, all appeared during the Western Zhou period in part thanks to this political concept.

The Western Zhou “feudal” system took shape in the course of Western Zhou kinship-based military colonization. This political arrangement not only sustained Chinese culture when ancient China faced many potential intruders, but also contributed to the spread of Western Zhou culture and identity, and its writing system. This last, in turn, would become the medium of communication among peoples of different linguistic backgrounds and would contribute to the lasting existence of vast “Chinese” empires in the absence of modern

176. Recently, various theories about the eastward migration of the Western Zhou royal house have been proposed (Wang 1998). Most of them are based on rather circumstantial evidence. This book follows the traditional and still widely accepted explanation of the Western Zhou royal house's eastward relocation.

177. Zhao (2009b).

infrastructural technologies.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, to regulate the relationships between the Western Zhou court and the enfeoffed city-states, the Zhou rulers gradually improvised a system of lineage law. The development of lineage law furthered the importance of family in Chinese culture. Lineage-law tradition together with Mandate of Heaven ideology to a great extent redirected Chinese thinking from miracle-granting heaven and ancestors to benefits derived from worldly good conduct. Such good conduct, centered as it was on lineage rituals, familial ethics, and beneficent rule, laid the intellectual foundation for Confucianism. Finally, the growth and proliferation of the lineages and the complicated, protocol-governed rituals centered on the lineage principles facilitated notions of hierarchical division of labor and meritocratic selection of officials from among qualified members of the aristocracy. Hierarchy, division of labor, and meritocracy contributed to the emergence of bureaucracy during the Western Zhou period.

A few other Western Zhou characteristics important for our understanding of Western Zhou history and its legacies are mentioned in the chapter. In the Western Zhou economy, land was not privately owned and self-employed farmers and artisans were few. Universal education for the children of city dwellers may have existed. Most importantly, whereas most historians have seen the country dwellers as slaves or as members of the lowest classes, I point out that most country dwellers of the Western Zhou period lived quite beyond the reach of the city-states in “unpopulated” areas. This gave both the city dwellers of the Western and early Eastern Zhou eras an exit option—they could flee the bounds of the state system for one of the uncontrolled areas. This constituted an important source of “political freedom,” especially for the city dwellers.

178. Gu (2005, pp. 1–3) once asserted that Eastern Zhou interstate warfare and territorial expansion had prompted late Eastern Zhou scholars to imagine all the ancient Chinese states as belonging to a single community, and that such an imaginary promulgated in writings and rituals greatly fostered China’s unification under the Qin and Han dynasties. Gu’s assertion about geographic imagination and China’s unification is logical, but it is historically irrelevant. The geographic imagination of the Eastern Zhou elite was not derived from the late Eastern Zhou state’s territorial expansion but from the early Western Zhou kinship-based state system. See Chapters 6–8 for the components that made possible Qin’s conquest of China.

The Historical Setting of Eastern Zhou: An Age of War

Neither the events nor the circumstances of history develop from a tabula rasa. Eastern Zhou history unfolded under certain demographic, geographic, and climatic conditions.¹ To understand that history, we need to have a sense of these conditions and their effects on Eastern Zhou historical dynamics. As we saw in chapter 2, the forerunners of the large territorial states that formed during late Eastern Zhou emerged from the much smaller city-states of Western Zhou and early Eastern Zhou. These early Eastern Zhou city-states and the differences among them were also crucial to the patterns of Eastern Zhou history. Their interactions with the surrounding nonagrarian political groups, however, were less so.

This transitional chapter attempts to establish the following demographic and geographic conditions of Eastern Zhou China, and why neither demographic changes nor the nonagrarian border peoples were crucial in the shaping of Eastern Zhou history; the nature of the city-states and their interactions with early Eastern Zhou society; and the major state actors in Eastern Zhou politics and warfare, namely the states that would most affect Eastern Zhou history.

During Eastern Zhou's 550-year history, fundamental changes took place in the political, military, and societal spheres. To better understand these changes, I propose a tripartite periodization of Eastern Zhou history—the Age of Hegemons (770–546 BCE), the Age of Transition (545–420 BCE), and the Age of Total War (419–221 BCE)—to capture this period's historical transformations and the forces behind the historical change.

1. Demographic impact on history is very complicated. An increase in population, for example, generates at least two kinds of mechanisms with opposite impacts: a Smithian mechanism facilitates the development of economy and society (Boserup 1981); a Malthusian mechanism leads to multiple problems—retardation of labor-saving technological development (due to the abundance of cheap labor); diminishing returns on labor; and increasing social conflicts, epidemics, wars, and state breakdown (Goldstone 1991). As a historical force, demography is both endogenous and exogenous. Population dynamics are related to family structure, the culture/ideology centered on gender relations, and the level of economic development of the time—hence, endogenous. Before the advent of modernity, the workings of natural selection in various forms of density-dependent mortalities were largely independent of social structural forces—hence, exogenous.

EASTERN ZHOU DEMOGRAPHY AND ITS IMPACT

Chinese historical demographers have worked hard to reconstruct the population dynamics of ancient China, but the available data are inadequate.² With regard to the Western Zhou population, received texts, such as *History of the Eastern Han* and *Rites of Zhou*, do contain some detailed demographic accounts³—whose credibility all serious scholars doubt.⁴ One of the more credible of these mentions holds that, after his army was badly defeated by Chu, King Xuan of Zhou (r. 827–782 BCE) conducted a census,⁵ but it does not say what method was used to collect the data or what the results of the census were. In the end, historical demographers can only provide us with educated guesses, which place China's population during the Western Zhou at roughly between ten and fifteen million people.⁶

Estimating the population during the Eastern Zhou era is equally difficult. By the mid-Eastern Zhou period, all the major states had started to collect information on population, taxation, and other matters.⁷ During the Warring States period many states even implemented family registration systems for the households under their control.⁸ Still, no substantial evidence has survived from which to reconstruct the demography of the time. Present-day Chinese demographers can only reconstruct the late Eastern Zhou population using one of two methods. The first is to project the Eastern Zhou population based on the registered population data of China's second imperial dynasty, the Western Han (which is a little more reliable). This method yields an estimate of about forty million people by the end of the Eastern Zhou period.⁹ Since this figure is considerably higher than other similar estimates, I treat it as the upper limit of the estimated late-Eastern Zhou population.

The second method is to estimate the population based on the supposed number of warriors in each major state during late Eastern Zhou. Of various received texts, *Stratagems of the Warring States* (*Guoce*; hereafter referred to as *Stratagems*) offers the most detailed account.¹⁰ During late Eastern Zhou, there emerged a vocation later referred to as *strategist* or *diplomat*. These were men who went from state to state trying to persuade the rulers to adopt their

2. Jiang (1998); Y. Wang (1995); Zhao and Xie (1988). See Song (2005) for an impressive recent reconstruction of early China's population.

3. Ge (2002, pp. 218–20, 266–67) provides a complete list of all the demographic accounts in the two received texts.

4. Ge (2002, chaps. 5–6).

5. *Discourses of the States* ("Discourses of Zhou 1"; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, p. 24). Most historians believe that King Xuan conducted the census in order to recruit warriors.

6. Zhao and Xie (1988, p. 13).

7. Ge (2002, pp. 224–25); Jiang (1998, p. 34).

8. Archaeological findings have confirmed this practice in Chu, a state where the Legalist reform was carried out with much less success than in the other warring states. See Chen (1996, chap. 4) for a discussion of the household registration records unearthed in the Chu tombs.

9. Ge (2002, p. 304).

10. Reproduced in Miao (1987). See Crump (1996) for the English translation.

ideas of diplomacy, particularly with regard to the formation of interstate alliances. Some of them apparently commanded considerable political clout. They rose to high ministerial ranks, and their disciples compiled famous and successful political “persuasions” credited to their masters.¹¹ *Stratagems* is one of these books that have survived. Understandably, biases and exaggerations are everywhere in the book; but it nevertheless remains a useful historical source. For instance, the book relates that the famous strategist Su Qin tried to persuade King Xuan of Qi (r. 319–301 BCE) to join an anti-Qin alliance. To boost King Xuan’s confidence in such an alliance, Su apparently stressed Qi’s power by underscoring its huge population and its wealth, bolstering his case by mentioning that Qi’s capital, Linzi, comprised seventy thousand households.¹² Archaeologists have located and measured the ruins of the city and established different indexes to measure the city’s populations.¹³ Based on their findings, historians tend to credit the seventy-thousand-households figure.¹⁴ Historians credit *Stratagems* as a source of much useful historical information, if it is interpreted and analyzed very cautiously. On the matter of late-Eastern Zhou population, the book’s various chapters report a quite different number of warriors in each state. Historical demographers therefore tend to estimate averages. Based on the numbers cited in the *Stratagems*, they have estimated the late-Eastern Zhou population to be about thirty million people.¹⁵ If we take this number as a low estimate, we can conclude that ancient China’s population multiplied from ten to fifteen million to thirty to forty million (threefold or slightly less) in the six hundred or

11. Lewis (1999a, pp. 590–91).

12. *Stratagems* (Qi 1, reproduced in Miao 1987, pp. 326–27).

13. The circumference of Linzi was 14,158 meters (Qun 1972). See also Qu (1991) and K. Yang (2003, pp. 61–66) for more detailed discussion on the archaeological findings of the city.

14. Paul Wheatley (1971, pp. 189–90) has expressed doubt about Su Qin’s account of the size of Linzi’s population. He reasons that the neighboring state of Wey built its city-state at Chuqiu in 659 BCE or 658 BCE (the year is disputed; see *Zuo’s Commentary*, Xi 2; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 281) with only 5,000 inhabitants and that it is impossible that Linzi’s population could have been so disproportionately large relative to Chuqiu’s. Wheatley’s reasoning, however, is questionable. First, the 5,000 residents of Chuqiu recorded in *Zuo’s Commentary* cannot be used to index the city-state’s actual population. When Chuqiu was built, it served as a refugee camp for those who had escaped the attack by the Di people. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Min 2, 660 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 267) also records that when the city-state of Wey had only 5,000 residents, its army was reduced to only thirty chariots, which would have been manned by about 900 warriors. (During early Eastern Zhou, one chariot was usually accompanied by thirty warriors [Chen 1991, pp. 138–45].) But by 635 BCE, just twenty-seven years after relocating its capital to Chuqiu, Wey’s chariot force had increased to 300 (requiring about 9,000 warriors). This swift increase in the number of chariots, of course, does not indicate Wey’s actual population growth, but it possibly suggests that some of Wey’s inhabitants who had been scattered during the Di invasion had returned. If we assume that Wey’s fighting population increased proportionally with the rest of the city’s population (for only city dwellers fought at that time), then Chuqiu’s population would have been 50,000 by 635 BCE.

Secondly, Wey was relocated to Chuqiu in 658 BCE, but Su Qin’s estimate was made more than 350 years later, during which time Chinese cities had experienced enormous growth. Finally, Wey was a small- to medium-sized state, while Qi was one of the largest states, and Linzi was known at the time for its great prosperity. This also makes Wheatley’s comparison dubious. Most Chinese and Japanese scholars believe that although Su Qin’s account is exaggerated, it is not entirely without basis (Ge 2002, pp. 298–99).

15. Zhao and Xie (1988, p. 19).

so years between late Western Zhou and the late Eastern Zhou, a relatively small increase. With no better data available, however, I base my analysis on this rough estimate. The rather scanty increase might have something to do with the incessant and increasingly brutal warfare of late Eastern Zhou, which had resulted in a huge attrition in population. However, these numbers may reflect not so much real population growth as territorial expansion, and the greater reach of the states into the groups living in their hinterlands. By late Eastern Zhou, all major Chinese city-states had become bureaucratized (see chapter 7). Various societies that had previously remained outside state control, were being caged into adjacent states.¹⁶ The bureaucratic apparatus that had been created as part of the Legalist reform also enabled the states to count their subjects more accurately, and this may account for the “rise” in population.¹⁷

Even accepting the estimated population increase as valid, I have been unable to find historical evidence indicating that it was a major engine of social change in this period. At the beginning of Eastern Zhou, in 770 BCE, ancient China’s population may have numbered ten to fifteen million. But there ensued a period of warmer weather.¹⁸ Many regions in north China grew two crops annually.¹⁹ Agricultural productivity also increased during late Eastern Zhou because iron tools were by then in widespread use.²⁰ More and more land was also being incorporated into the states. These changes allowed the land of ancient China to support a much larger population.

There are no hints in either the received texts or the archaeological reports that any state faced problems of overpopulation during the Eastern Zhou period. Rather, the opposite was often the case: to build a stronger military, many states adopted measures to either encourage reproduction or cage more people into their domains.²¹ Nor have I found any evidence that the incessant warfare of the time was caused by overpopulation.

16. On the states’ caging efforts, see the discussion of city dwellers and country dwellers in chapter 2.

17. “Legalist reform” is a term used by Chinese historians and some Western historians to depict ancient Chinese states’ efforts to build strong bureaucracies and to organize themselves into war machines during the Age of Total War. I use the term to describe the Warring States transformation just to follow the convention and to ease the communication.

18. Zhu (1972).

19. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Yin 3, 720 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 27) records that the Zheng army, having invaded Zhou, harvested wheat in the spring and millet in the fall. Similar accounts of double cropping in the Yellow River region appear in many other received texts.

20. By mid-Eastern Zhou iron tools had come into common use. Gu and Zhu (2001, pp. 166–68) report that iron objects unearthed between the 1970s and 1990s show very clearly that by early- to mid-Eastern Zhou the Chinese no longer used meteoric iron to cast objects. Moreover, whereas the iron objects found in earlier archaeological sites were almost exclusively weapons, in the archaeological sites dated between the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE, most of the iron objects uncovered were agricultural tools.

21. The most extreme measures used to encourage childbearing were recorded in *Discourses of the States* (“Discourses of Yue”; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978). In order to expand the much-needed fighting population, King Goujian of Yue (r. 496–465 BCE) banned marriages between people who differed greatly in age, and decreed that women had to marry by age 17 and men by age 20, among many other policies.

Moreover, although the higher population density during late Eastern Zhou must have contributed to the rise of large cities, to a market economy, and to merchant power, neither their lack in Western Zhou nor their quick development in Eastern Zhou was decisively contributed to by the change in population. We are led to this conclusion by reasoning as follows: first, numerous state-operated Western Zhou workshops were excavated in the twentieth century.²² Some of these sites were so vast that it is reasonable to say that if their products (especially the bronze vessels) had been produced privately, they certainly would have sustained a large market.²³ Obviously, the lack of a market economy in the Western Zhou was not related to the lower population density but to the nature of the state and the associated mode of production. Secondly, despite the increase in population size, population density during late-Eastern Zhou period was lower than that of most of the later Chinese dynasties.²⁴ Nonetheless, late Eastern Zhou reached a level of commercial activity that was probably comparable to that of the Western Han dynasty. This is because merchants of the later dynasties had lower status than their Eastern Zhou counterparts,²⁵ and the Chinese cities after Eastern Zhou also developed to become strictly political centers, until the Song dynasty, when the population reached the 100-million level.²⁶

THE GEOGRAPHY AND POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT CHINA

We can analyze the impact of geography on Eastern Zhou history on two different levels. The first considers how geographic conditions shaped the general historical patterns of Eastern Zhou China. The second considers how different geographic and geopolitical conditions in ancient China facilitated the development of some states but hindered the development of others. Both are important questions; in this section, I focus on the first, addressing the second in later chapters whenever the issue becomes pertinent.

The Geography of Ancient China

Eastern Zhou China was located in a temperate zone, roughly between 30 and 40 degrees latitude and 105 and 122 degrees longitude. It measured less than two million square kilometers, or about one-fifth the size of contemporary China.

22. *Zhongguo gudai yejin* (1978).

23. For example, a workshop unearthed in present-day Zhengzhou that was used for making bronze vessels during the Shang dynasty measured 10,000 square meters in size. A bronze vessel workshop dating to the Western Zhou, unearthed at Luoyang, measured 100,000 square meters, and over 10,000 clay models were found scattered around the site, reflecting a truly gigantic scale of production (*Zhongguo gudai yejin* 1978, pp. 4–9).

24. Zhao and Xie (1988).

25. See chapter 7 for more discussion of the power and status of the late Eastern Zhou merchants.

26. For the Chinese population during and after the Song dynasty (960–1279), see Jiang (1998); and Zhao and Xie (1988). See chapter 13 for China's commercialism during and after the Song dynasty.

The region was largely self-contained: to the east was the Pacific Ocean. The Taihang Mountains and the desert formed its northern boundary. To the south were the Nanling Mountains, which together with this region's hot, wet tropical climate, endemic diseases, and deep forests precluded the formation of any competing civilization.²⁷ To the west were multiple mountain ranges on the high Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, known as the "roof of the world." The entire region was cut through by the Yellow and the Yangzi Rivers and their numerous tributaries. Despite these natural defensive barriers, ancient China was nonetheless accessible from the west, north, and northeast through a number of river passages and mountain passes. Although some of these passages and passes became more accessible as people on both sides of the passages and passes learned more about the geography and developed their means of transportation and communication over time, Eastern Zhou was still a highly defensible territory.

The Impact of the Pastoral Peoples

During the Western Zhou period, herders from the north, broadly labeled in the received texts as the Rong and the Di peoples,²⁸ migrated into China in large numbers, driven south by a prolonged period of extremely cold weather.²⁹ As noted in chapter 2, their arrival contributed to the collapse of the Western Zhou dynasty. Yet by early Eastern Zhou they were gradually transitioning from herding to stationary farming,³⁰ establishing state-like polities alongside the Chinese states³¹; intermarrying with the Chinese³²; participating in Eastern Zhou politics and warfare, either independently or as allies of one Chinese state or another³³; and becoming increasingly indistinguishable from the Chinese.³⁴

27. See Gourou (1980) for an excellent analysis of why the tropical climate was not conducive to the formation of a sustainable civilization.

28. Not all of the peoples that the received texts labeled as Rong and Di were from the north. Aboriginal herders who had co-inhabited with the agrarian population before the arrival of the northern herders were scattered in north China (Duan 1989).

29. Keightley (1999, p. 33). See also Hsu (2002, pp. 220–44) for the analysis of the relationships between climate changes and the migration of the Inner Asian populations.

30. Průšek (1971, chap. 7).

31. Non-Chinese states frequently named in *Zuo's Commentary* include Yangju, Mao Rong, and Yi Rong near the Eastern Zhou capital; Dangshe, Pengxishi, and Yiqu around Qin; Shan Rong close to Lu; and Li Rong, Xianyu, and Dongshan Gaoluoshi near Jin. See Shi (1990a, 1990b) for a more complete account.

32. For example, *Grand Historian* ("History of Jin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1657) relates that when Duke Wen of Jin was a refugee in a Di state, he and his follower Zhao Cui married two women of Di origin. The same source also mentions that Duke Xian of Jin (Duke Wen's father) had a wife of Di origin.

33. For example, in *Zuo's Commentary* (Yin 2, 721 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 20–22), it is recorded that Duke Yin of Lu (r. 722–712 BCE) and the Rong people made a covenant to strengthen their traditional friendship. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xi 24, 636 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 425) also tells a story in which Di troops helped King Xiang of Zhou (r. 652–619 BCE) attack Zheng and out of gratitude King Xiang married the daughter of the Di ruler. Although some speeches recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* and *Grand Historian* tend to describe the Rong and the Di as greedy, immoral barbarians, many records of events in the two texts, such as those that I have just summarized, present far different pictures.

34. Recent archaeological discoveries in a major state of Di origin (Zhongshan) have found a culture strikingly similar to that of other ancient Chinese states, and that its people were equally skilled in casting bronze ritual vessels that were used for ritual purposes and similar to those of their Chinese neighbors (Falkenhausen 2006, pp. 254–62).

Even though the states established by the Rong and the Di posed a certain level of military threat to some Chinese states during the early Eastern Zhou period,³⁵ the main enemies of most Chinese states were their Chinese counterparts.³⁶ My war data show that, of the 776 Eastern Zhou military conflicts recorded in the received sources, only thirty-eight (4.9%) were initiated by non-Chinese states. Of these, thirty (79%) took place before 546 BCE,³⁷ in the early phase of Eastern Zhou history.³⁸ On the other hand, Chinese states initiated fifty-seven clashes (7.3%) against non-Chinese states, thirty-one of which (54%) broke out after 546 BCE. Clashes between the Chinese states and non-Chinese states thus constituted only a small fraction of the total number of wars fought during Eastern Zhou, and throughout this period, the military strength of the non-Chinese states vis-à-vis their enemies was declining. In other words, Eastern Zhou history was shaped more by wars among the Chinese states than by wars between Chinese and non-Chinese states.³⁹

THE NATURE OF EARLY EASTERN ZHOU CITY-STATES

Eastern Zhou city-states developed roughly in three stages: they started as walled defense strongholds (*guo*) of varying sizes during Western Zhou. Some of these city-states began absorbing the others. The bigger and stronger city-states then entered the second stage in which they built more strongholds in their regions and became multicity states. In a multicity state, the city in which the duke resided was called *du* (“the capital” or the “metropolitan” city), while other cities, under the control of aristocrats of minor lineages, were called *yi* (the minor cities). Some city-states entered the second stage earlier than others, but in general this stage lasted from late Western Zhou to mid-Eastern Zhou. It was followed by the third stage, when some of the multicity states had gained enough strength to control the minor cities and to incorporate ungoverned land into their territories. By late Eastern Zhou, these successful multicity states had become territorial states, and could even be seen as empires (in the sense that

35. Huang (2000, p. 5) has analyzed how military pressure from the Rong and the Di contributed to the collapse of many Western Zhou city-states in early Eastern Zhou.

36. Di Cosmo (1999a, p. 886) also argues that the “relationship between China and the nomads appears to have been of secondary importance to Chinese history until . . . during the Qin-Han period.”

37. Moreover, in comparison with the major wars fought among the big Chinese states, these were not large-scale conflicts.

38. See the last section of this chapter for the periodization of Eastern Zhou history.

39. I have adopted an internalist account of early China history. Historical sociologists have recounted history in one of two ways. The first depicts the development of a civilization through largely internal processes without much consideration of its relationships with neighboring civilizations (Ertman 1997; Hall 1986; Poggi 1990; Tilly 1992); the second sees the history of a given entity as being driven by its interactions with other cultures at the regional, Eurasian, or global levels (Burke 1997; Huntington 1996; McNeill 1968; Wallenstein 1979). I find it unfruitful to judge the superiority of one approach over the other, because their relative validity always depends on the questions one poses and on the nature of the historical period one is dealing with.

each controlled a large territory that included a significant amount of land inhabited by minorities and aboriginals).

The Devolution of State Power

At the zenith of its power, the Western Zhou court had directly controlled a royal domain extending from the Wei River valley to the Luoyang basin.⁴⁰ It commanded a standing army of fourteen divisions.⁴¹ By mid-Western Zhou, the Western Zhou court had also developed a rudimentary bureaucracy (see chapter 2). For a time, the Western Zhou government might also have effectively controlled other city-states. And such control was maintained both normatively by lineage law and coercively by the sheer size of its military.⁴² By any measure, state power grew considerably over the course of Western Zhou history. State power, however, diminished after the collapse of Western Zhou, to be rebuilt at the beginning of Eastern Zhou at a very elementary level, under the stimulus of wars.⁴³

There were about 150 city-states at the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period,⁴⁴ most of them tiny⁴⁵; some probably had only a few thousand inhabitants.⁴⁶ Except for the state of Chu, none of these city-states, not even the larger ones, had a standing army. Although some scholars believe that the early Eastern Zhou city-states did have standing armies,⁴⁷ neither the received texts nor archaeological findings support this belief. Accounts in *Zuo's Commentary*, for example, show that Jin, one of the two most powerful states of early Eastern Zhou, established its first standing army in 678 BCE (Zhuang 16), a second one in 661 BCE (Min 1), and a third one in 633 BCE (Xi 27).⁴⁸ In other words, even a state as powerful as Jin did not have a standing army at the start of Eastern Zhou.

40. Li (2006, p. 30).

41. He (2001, p. 100) has questioned the existence of standing armies during Western Zhou. Most scholars, however, believe that, beyond doubt, standing armies existed during the Western Zhou. Bronze inscription record "Yin 8 divisions," "Chengzhou 8 divisions," and "West 6 divisions." Scholars believe that the "Yin 8 divisions" and "Chengzhou 8 divisions" were the same army, stationed in the east, whereas the "West 6 divisions" were stationed in the royal domain. Crediting the bronze inscriptions, the Western Zhou court commanded a total of fourteen standing army divisions (Shaughnessy 1999b, pp. 322–23; Li 1957; Yu 1964), each consisting of roughly 3,000 warriors (Chen 1991, p. 62).

42. For example, *Grand Historian* ("History of Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1481) relates that Duke Ai of Qi (d. ca. 863 BCE) was boiled alive by the Zhou king after being maligned by another duke within the king's hearing. The Zhou king's coercive power before late Western Zhou was incontestable.

43. This devolution of state power is similar to what happened in Western Europe following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.

44. Gu and Zhu (2001, pp. 27–37) list 140 states mentioned in *Zuo's Commentary*.

45. For example, Linzi had two city walls. The circumference of the inner wall was 7,275 meters, much smaller than the circumference of the outer wall (14,158 meters) built during late Eastern Zhou (Du 1992, p. 555; Qun 1972). The evidence not only shows the scale of early Linzi, but also its later expansion. See also Yates (1997, p. 83) on the sizes of Eastern Zhou city-states.

46. Hsu (2002, pp. 70–71).

47. Chen (1991, p. 64). He Xiu, an Eastern Han dynasty scholar, commented on the size of the armies during Western Zhou: "A King had six divisions, a Regional Lord had two divisions, and a Duke had one division" (*Gongyang's Commentary*, Yin 5, 718 BCE; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 2207).

48. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 203, 258, 445).

There is further evidence that city-states in early Eastern Zhou did not have standing armies. During this period, all adult males who resided in the cities were required to fight in times of military action. *Zuo's Commentary* notes several mobilizations of city dwellers before impending clashes. In 712 BCE (Yin 11), before the state of Zheng attacked Xu, Duke Zhuang of Zheng (r. 743–701 BCE) distributed weapons to city dwellers at his ancestral temple, where two of the duke's ministers brawled with each other because they wanted the same chariot.⁴⁹ In 686 BCE (Zhuang 8), Duke Zhuang of Lu (r. 693–662 BCE) also distributed weapons at his ancestral temple before embarking on a military campaign.⁵⁰ And in 660 BCE (Min 2), when invasion threatened, the men of Wey received weapons but refused to fight out of antipathy toward the duke (Duke Yi, r. 668–660 BCE).⁵¹ This story shows that Wey did not have a standing army as late as 660 BCE.

As noted in the previous chapter, bureaucracy during mid-Western Zhou developed only in the royal domain, not in the city-states. The commandery-county (district) organization of territories (*jun xian zhi*),⁵² which showed significant bureaucratic elements and must have been descended from Western Zhou institutional innovations, appeared in several major city-states only in the mid-seventh century BCE, after these states had expanded their territories to the point of needing some form of territorial/administrative organization (see chapter 5).⁵³ But, as noted earlier, following the collapse of Western Zhou, the bureaucratization process in ancient China came to a halt. Not only did the early Eastern Zhou city-states not have any bureaucratic apparatus, but the “feudalization” processes that would become widespread during the seventh century BCE had not yet occurred.⁵⁴ The early-Eastern Zhou city-states were too small to be further parceled out. Government in these city-states was meager; the duke and his associates took charge of a few crucial aspects of state affairs, centering on ancestor worship and warfare, and the lineage heads managed daily life in each of the communities with great autonomy.⁵⁵

During Eastern Zhou, dukes' as well as lesser aristocrats' perceptions of ducal power and responsibility underwent rapid change. In early Eastern Zhou,⁵⁶ a duke was merely the first among equals within the aristocratic class, most likely he perceived himself and was perceived by others less as a head

49. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 72–73).

50. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 173).

51. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 265).

52. The Chinese word *xian* has been translated into English as “county” or “district.” *Xian* is the smallest administrative unit of imperial China, and its nature changed greatly over the course of Chinese history. Sinologists tend to use the word “district” for *xian* in ancient China contexts.

53. Zhao (2004).

54. Hsu (1999); Lü (1998). Many Chinese historians, however, credit the existence of a three-layer feudal structure (that is, king to dukes, dukes to ministers, and ministers to retainers) during Western Zhou.

55. F. Li (2008, chap. 7).

56. Hou (2003, p. 113).

of a state than as the head of a lineage. His authority was far from absolute. Stories in *Zuo's Commentary* shed light on how dukes acted and were treated by lower-ranking aristocrats at this time. Examples are numerous, but the following six stories illustrate the point.

- (1) In 686 BCE (Zhuang 8),⁵⁷ Duke Xiang of Qi (r. 697–686 BCE) posted two officers to a military position about 180 kilometers from the Qi capital for one year. But when the year was up, the two officers' request to return to the capital was denied. They retaliated by killing the duke.
- (2) In 683 BCE (Zhuang 11),⁵⁸ the state of Lu defeated Song and captured the Song minister Nangong Changwan. After Nangong was released and returned to Song, Duke Min of Song (r. 691–682 BCE) mocked Nangong: "I once held you in great respect, but not after you allowed yourself to be captured by Lu." Feeling disrespected, Nangong killed the duke.⁵⁹
- (3) In 662 BCE (Zhuang 32),⁶⁰ Duke Zhuang of Lu looked out from a tower, saw a beautiful woman in a house, and wanted her as a concubine. But the woman rejected the duke until he agreed to make her his wife (as opposed to concubine), and they took a blood oath on this before the marriage.
- (4) In 660 BCE (Min 2),⁶¹ the tutor of Duke Min of Lu (r. 661–660 BCE) seized a piece of land from a man (most likely an aristocrat). That man killed the duke, because the duke had failed to discipline his own tutor.
- (5) In 637 BCE (Xi 23),⁶² Duke Xian of Jin (r. 676–651 BCE) sent troops to arrest Prince Chong-er after he was implicated in a palace intrigue. But the prince's subjects chose to defend him. To avoid an open war, the prince went into exile.
- (6) In 600–599 BCE (Xuan 9–10),⁶³ Duke Ling of Chen (r. 613–599 BCE) and two of his ministers all had affairs with a beautiful woman named Xia Ji. Moreover, the three men frequently wore Xia Ji's underwear in the court and bragged openly about their intimate relations with her. One day the duke and the two ministers held a drinking party at the house of Xia Zhengshu (Xia Ji's son). At the party the duke told one minister that "Xia Zhengshu looks like you." That minister then replied: "He also looks like you." A greatly insulted Xia Zhengshu killed the duke.

As the above stories show, a ruling duke could be killed for not fulfilling a promise, for deriding a minister, or even for the wrongdoing of his tutor. The

57. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 174).

58. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 189).

59. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 191).

60. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 253).

61. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 262).

62. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 404).

63. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 701–2).

fifth story also shows that city dwellers were more loyal to their masters than to the duke of their state.⁶⁴ Not only was ducal power not absolute, but dukes did not enjoy a level of power or prestige much above that of other aristocrats. Therefore, a woman could reject a duke until he took a blood oath to marry her, and dukes and their ministers could dally with the same woman at the same time and openly boast about it. In the early–Eastern Zhou city-states, neither the state and family nor the state and society were highly differentiated. In comparison with later standards, the dukes neither behaved like nor were treated as the head of state.

LINEAGE-BASED CITY-STATES

According to traditional understanding, lineages and clans are kinship-based organizations; whereas a state is a territory-based organization. The city-states of early Eastern Zhou were lineage based:⁶⁵ except for Chu and Song, all the major city-states started as colonies headed by close relatives and allies of the Western Zhou founders (see chapter 2). Although most of these city-states retained their indigenous populations, the Western Zhou colonizers, most originally from the same lineage, were the dominant group in each. Ancient Chinese city-states were thus political organizations based on blood relationships. The decision-making institutions of these city-states were quite informal.⁶⁶ There was no trace of bureaucracy. In an early Eastern Zhou city-state, state decisions frequently went against the will of the duke.⁶⁷ As noted earlier, the duke saw himself and was seen by others more as the head of a lineage than as the primary state leader.

In historical sociology, state formation is often seen as a revolutionary social development that allowed a state to break away from ruling kinship groups and turn itself into a non-kinship-based territorial organization.⁶⁸ During Western Zhou, however, the creation of the city-states, which might have been

64. In fact, “people should be loyal to their masters instead of the state” was a general ethical principle at the time (Yang 1999, pp. 449–50).

65. Among various early China historians, Hou (2003, p. 148) once used the term “clan-states” (*shizu guojia*) to denote early Eastern Zhou city-states, though he never fully depicted the concept. Hsu (1965, p. 78) described this kind of state, but without giving it a name: “[This state] was not a purely political institution. The state resembled an enlarged household; the ruler reigned, but he did not rule. Ministers were important, but not because they held their offices: they achieved importance and received offices because they were kin to the ruler or because they were heads of prominent families.”

66. The duke of a city-state mostly made decisions on his own or with the advice of a few associates. The first few pages of *Zuo's Commentary* suffice to convey this impression. See chapter 2 for the informality of the collective decision-making process in a city-state.

67. For example, in just a single year of entries in *Zuo's Commentary* (Yin 1, 722 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 10): (1) Fei Bo led warriors to construct a city at Lang without being ordered to do so by Duke Yin of Lu; (2) the states of Lu, Zhu, and Zheng drew up a covenant in Yi without Duke Yin's permission; and (3) the south gate of Lu's capital was built without an order from Duke Yin.

68. Crone (1986); Hansen (2000, p. 13).

expected to weaken the family- or kin-based social relations, instead strengthened them. During Eastern Zhou, the social changes brought swiftly about by interstate military conflicts fundamentally altered the nature and relationship of the state and society as formed during Western Zhou, as we will see in later chapters. Not even social changes of that magnitude, however, were able to destroy China's inherited, family-based political orders, because all the territorial states that emerged during late Eastern Zhou, including Qin, had developed from lineage-based city-state predecessors without neck-breaking political or societal disruption.

More importantly, Western Zhou family-based politics facilitated the rise of an intellectual tradition that later, as Confucianism, offered a rational understanding of the world based on an idealized vision of kinship-based Western Zhou politics. In the early Western Han dynasty, although the organization of the Chinese state was no longer kinship based, the organizational principles and ideology of the state and its relationship to society were heavily shaped by Confucianism's kinship-based understanding of the politics. Confucianism preserved ancient China's kinship-based culture to such an extent that even today, the Chinese word for state (*guojia*) literally means "state family."

NONTERRITORIAL NATURE OF THE CITY-STATES AND ITS IMPLICATION

Earlier scholarship tended to view the city-states as the opposite of the large territorial states.⁶⁹ Mogens Hansen, however, asserts that "a city-state is a territorial state just as much as any macro-state with multiple urban centers" and that the "type of state opposed to the city-state" would be "countryside state."⁷⁰ So, while the territorial state is variously defined, it generally has the following three elements: (1) exclusive claim over a specific territory; (2) the capacity to defend that territory; and (3) residents who consider that territory to be the foundation of a political community and who affirm a territory-based identity.

Judging by these criteria an early Eastern Zhou city-state was far from a territorial state. It occupied a territory, but neither the ruler nor people of that city-state seemed to feel an exclusive claim on that territory. The received texts frequently record the people of one state being unperturbed as the army of another state marched across their land, or when an outside political group began building a community or stronghold close by without much interference from the city-state authorities.⁷¹

69. Burke (1986); Ehrenberg (1960, p. 88); Trigger (1993).

70. Hansen (2000, p. 17).

71. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xi 33, 627 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 494).

Secondly, responding to military pressure, the rulers and people of a city-state frequently abandoned it. Yet, as long as they were able to build a new stronghold, or what they called “city” (*guo*), in a new place, the new city would be given the same name, and identified by that name by its own people as well as by the people of other city-states. For instance, the state of Lu, forced to relocate eastward from Lushan (Lu Mountain) in present-day Henan province to Qufu in Shandong province, kept the name Lu. The state of Wey was twice conquered by the Di, in 660 and 629 BCE, but those who had managed to escape from Wey’s besieged cities constructed a new state of Wey twice: first in Chuqiu in present-day Shandong province and then in Diqu in present-day Henan province.⁷² Such moves were common.⁷³ Thus the existence of city-state did not depend on its community’s capacity to defend a traditional territory, but on whether, after a forced relocation, the community was able to find a new home and to construct a stronghold there, and to cohere based on kinship identity.

Thirdly, people of early Eastern Zhou city-states did not have a strong territory-based identity due to their retained allegiance to the kinship-based identity of the Western Zhou, as is apparent when we compare the citizens of the Greek *polis* and the people of early Eastern Zhou city-states. To the Greeks, a *polis* was both a nucleated settlement and a political community, which was not so different from what we today understand as the state.⁷⁴ The *polis*’s community nature gave the Greeks a place-based identity. Greek citizens of a *polis* (for example, Athens or Corinth) always identified themselves and were identified by others as Athenians or Corinthians. The Chinese *guo* was first and foremost a defensive stronghold, and second (in most cases) also a place containing the ruler’s ancestral temple for worship.⁷⁵ In other words, a *guo* was very different from the modern concept of the state.

In Eastern Zhou China, people who lived in a particular city-state tended to identify themselves and be called by others either city dwellers (*guoren*) without any lineage- or place-based information or identity attached, or as people of a particular group (Lu people, Jin people, etc.) without linkage to their particular place of residence. City dweller was a cosmopolitan identity inherited from the pan-Western Zhou political order (in the ancient texts the term is mostly found in descriptions of domestic events); whereas the names Lu and Jin identified

72. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Min 2, 660 BCE, Xi 31, 629 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 265–67, 487).

73. Other states, such as Qi, Chu, Jin, Qin, Chen, Cai, and Xu, all relocated for various reasons.

74. Boegehold and Scafuro (1994); Hansen (2000, pp. 141–87); Manville (1990).

75. The presence of an ancestral temple, however, was not necessary for a place to be called *guo*. For example, *Zuo’s Commentary* (Yin 1, 722 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 10–14) relates that Duke Zhuang of Zheng and his younger brother turned enemies after the younger brother constructed a large stronghold (*yi*) in his domain. Later the two brothers went to war, and the younger one was defeated. Yet, both *Zuo’s Commentary* and *Gongyang’s Commentary* record the war as inter-*guo* (interstate). *Gongyang’s Commentary* (Yin 1, 722 BCE; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 2198) explains very explicitly that the war was recorded as an interstate conflict because the younger brother’s stronghold was also a *guo*.

specific lineages.⁷⁶ In short, the early Eastern Zhou Chinese had two rather separate identities: they were city dwellers according to Western Zhou political nomenclature, and they were also members of a kinship-based group. Since neither the pan-Zhou identity of city dweller nor the kinship-based identity was tied to a particular place, the Chinese at the time were simply unable to form territorial identities like those of the Greeks.⁷⁷

This conspicuous lack of territory-based identity had implications for Eastern Zhou historical development. During late Eastern Zhou, all the major city-states expanded into larger territorial states, but the social relations that were caged into the rising territorial states were not yet territory-based. Given the persistence of pan-Zhou identity and kinship-based identity, ancient Chinese did not develop the kind of place-based identity, or patriotism, that was common in the Greek *polis* and in postmedieval European city-states, even when the wars in Eastern Zhou turned increasingly brutal.⁷⁸ This partly explains why late Eastern Zhou scholars and aristocrats frequently moved from state to state in search of better jobs (see chapter 7). This was also why, once a person defected to become the commander of an enemy state's army, he would lead his newly acquired troops to slaughter the warriors and people of his home state without feeling much, if any, guilt.⁷⁹

THE MAJOR EASTERN ZHOU CITY-STATES

Even though most of the Eastern Zhou city-states were the products of the Western Zhou state policy, they were not at all the same culturally and politically.⁸⁰ Chu, for example, which predated Western Zhou and had inherited a quite different tradition.⁸¹ The city-states enfeoffed by the Western Zhou rulers were established under different local conditions, and in time the old differences grew wider and new ones emerged. When the Eastern Zhou warfare shifted into high gear, many of these states again remodeled themselves, based on new local conditions, in order to survive. This deepened some of the differences among them and led to isomorphic convergence in other aspects. War facilitated the

76. Words such as *Lu*, *Zheng*, and *Jin* originated either as names of a group's totem or as the name of the place where the group originally resided. These words were not names for ethnic groups, such as modern-day Jewish, Irish, or Indians. They were more like names for certain lineages, because the sizes of the groups were still quite small and the blood ties in each group were strong.

77. The frequency with which the following three sets of phrases appear in *Zuo's Commentary* also supports my reasoning: (1) *guo ren* (city people) (2) *Lu ren* (Lu people), *Jin ren* (Jin people), and the like; and (3) *Lu guo ren* (people in the state of Lu), *Jin guo ren* (people in the state of Jin), and so on (*Lu guo ren* and *Jin guo ren* being equivalent to "Athenians" and "Corinthians" in Greece). *Guo ren* appears a total of fifty-six times. Phrases such as *Lu ren* and *Jin ren* appear a total of 595 times for the nine major Eastern Zhou city-states included in my count. Phrases such as *Lu guo ren* and *Jin guo ren* never appear. In many other received texts, the results are pretty much the same: The frequencies of the first two sets of phrases vary in different texts, but the last set of phrases never appears.

78. Balot (2006, pp. 56–57); Burke (1986); Ehrenberg (1960, p. 86).

79. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

80. Blakeley (1977a, 1977b, 1979); Qiu et al. (2003); Shim (2002); and Thatcher (1977–78).

81. See Cook and Major (1999); Y. Li (2002); and Zhang (1995) for the history of Chu.

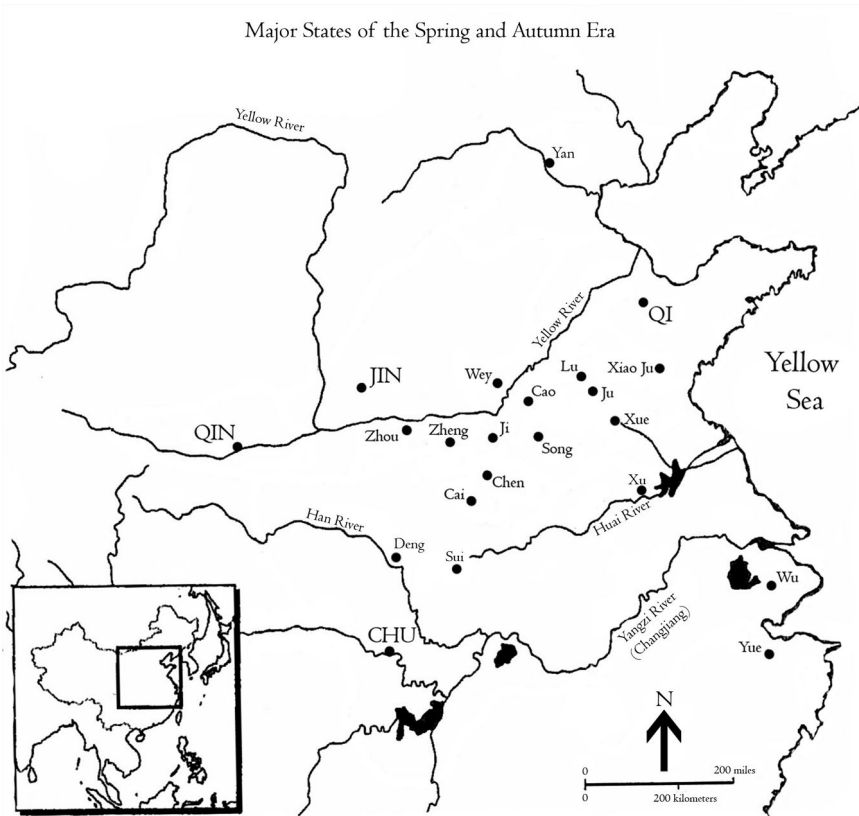


FIGURE 3.1. Major states of the Early Eastern Zhou era

efficiency-driven cumulative development during Eastern Zhou. But it was the local differences that shaped the competing states' options and patterned the dynamics of Eastern Zhou history.

Although the Eastern Zhou period began with 150 city-states, only twelve of them exerted a significant impact on the politics and the development of Eastern Zhou.⁸² They are listed here along with their location in present-day China (figure 3.1):

- Eastern Zhou (Henan)
- Song (Henan)
- Zheng (Henan)
- Wey (Henan)
- Lu (southwestern Shandong)
- Wu (southern Jiangsu)

82. A few states of Rong and Di origins must also have had great strength, judging from the military pressure they exerted on other states during early Eastern Zhou, but their might did not match that of larger states, and the extant records on these states are too meager for us to construct anything substantial.

Yue (eastern Zhejiang)
 Jin (southwestern Shanxi)
 Chu (Hubei and southern Henan)
 Qin (the Wei River valley, Shaanxi)
 Qi (northeastern Shandong)
 Yan (around present-day Beijing)

The Eastern Zhou state (hereafter, I will refer to the state of Eastern Zhou as “Zhou” to distinguish it from the Eastern Zhou period and its divisions) was descended from Western Zhou. During the early Eastern Zhou period, the Zhou ruling house was still *primus inter pares* among all the city-states (except Chu). Zhou was the only state whose ruler proclaimed himself king.⁸³ The rulers in the rest of the states took the ducal or a lesser title. The Zhou ruling house belonged to the Major Lineage, and in early Eastern Zhou it was still respected by the ducal city-states, whose rulers, according to Western Zhou lineage law, belonged to Minor Lineages. The hegemon of a ducal state at this time still needed to attain legitimacy by defending the Zhou political order (see chapter 4); this allowed the Zhou court to retain its prestige.

Song, Zheng, Wey, and Lu were mid-sized states located in present-day Henan and Shandong provinces. Song was established by descendants of the Shang dynasty.⁸⁴ Zheng was one of the most powerful states of the early Eastern Zhou period. It was also one of the earliest to embrace pragmatic politics and military policies.⁸⁵ Its major problem was geopolitical. After the larger states located in the purlieu of ancient China rose to dominance, Zheng was surrounded. In the face of this unfavorable strategic location, Zheng’s moves toward rationalization continued. Zheng was the first state to inscribe codified law on a tripod cauldron displayed in public. A number of other reform measures also originated in Zheng.

Lu remained a middle-sized state until the mid-Eastern Zhou period.⁸⁶ Lu was founded by Boqin, son of the Duke of Zhou. Legend had it that after Lu’s military colonization, Boqin spent three years instilling Western Zhou culture and rituals

83. In the mid-Eastern Zhou, the rulers of Wu and Yue also claimed kingship, but they did not pose a prolonged threat to the northern states, as Chu did.

84. To lessen the resistance of the defeated Shang people, the early Western Zhou rulers allocated them an area, hence the origin of Song.

85. For example, *Zuo’s Commentary* (Yin 9, 714 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 65–66) offers the following entry: In a battle between Zheng and Bei Rong, a small contingent of the Zheng army first attacked the Bei Rong troops and then pretended to retreat. The Bei Rong troops then pursued the Zheng warriors into a Zheng ambush and were routed. Note that deception and ambush were considered immoral at the time (see chapter 5). Also, in 707 BCE (*Zuo’s Commentary*, Huan 5; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 103–104); King Huan of Zhou (r. 719–697 BCE) led his own army plus troops from three ducal states against Zheng. In the past, such “punishment” by the Zhou ruling house (a Major Lineage) carried ultimate legitimacy and was hard for a ducal state to resist. This time, however, the Zheng army led by Duke Zhuang not only defeated the allied forces but also wounded the king. The battle was a crucial turning point signifying the decline of the Zhou political order.

86. See Guo (1994) for an account of Lu history.

in the local population.⁸⁷ The legend may have some elements of truth, because Lu was famous throughout the Eastern Zhou period for exemplary maintenance of Western Zhou ritual and decorum.⁸⁸ It is perhaps not a coincidence that Confucius was from Lu. Lu is also important as the only state that produced a chronically arranged history centering on itself, extant today, entitled the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which also gave its name to the Spring and Autumn period.

Wu and Yue are seldom mentioned in the received texts before the sixth century BCE. Both states' origins and cultures differed from those of the Western Zhou city-states.⁸⁹ Because the south was rainy and muddy, chariot warfare, which predominated in the north during early to mid Eastern Zhou, was not much practiced by these two states.⁹⁰ Both states, however, excelled in naval and infantry warfare, and during mid-Eastern Zhou, both states grew strong. In 506 BCE, Wu defeated Chu in a series of battles and eventually sacked the Chu capital.⁹¹ Yet only a little over thirty years after this triumph, a militarily overextended Wu was eliminated by Yue, its archenemy. It was, however, a pyrrhic victory, after which Yue quickly weakened. Much of Yue's territory was taken over by Chu; some of its land even reverted into a stateless society.

Jin, Chu, Qi, Qin were the four most powerful states throughout the early to mid-Eastern Zhou. In 453 BCE, Jin was divided into three states: Wei, Han, and Zhao. These, along with Chu, Qi, Qin, and another state, Yan, became the Seven Warring States of late Eastern Zhou. The geopolitical map of China during the entire Eastern Zhou period remained quite stable. Except for Yan, which did not enter ancient Chinese geopolitics until very late, the others (Jin, Chu, Qi, and Qin) had been rivals ever since beginning of the Eastern Zhou. The four states shared two circumstances. First, they were all located on the fringes of ancient China (Jin in the north, Chu in the south, Qi in the east, and Qin in the West); they faced enemies on few fronts; and they were protected by the geographic features of their bordering regions. Secondly, they were all initiators in challenging and weakening the Western Zhou political order, and in breaking away from the Western Zhou code of morality by adopting more instrumental strategies in war. Their differing histories, however, made for very different attitudes toward the Zhou political order and different paths of development.

87. *Grand Historian* ("History of Lu"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1524).

88. Blakeley (1977a, p. 238) finds that, in comparison with Qi, the "kin" group in Lu occupied more of the political offices, another indication that Lu had retained more of the early Western Zhou culture.

89. *Grand Historian* ("History of Wu"; "History of Yue"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1445–76, 1739–56).

90. *Zuo's Commentary* (Cheng 7, 584 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 834–35) contains an entry about Wuchen, a Chu minister who had defected to Jin. On behalf of Jin, he joined a diplomatic mission to Wu, bringing with him thirty chariots as part of the mission's diplomatic gift. The entry goes on to say that he taught the Wu people how to use chariots in battle. The record in *Zuo's Commentary* indicates that chariots were not used in Wu at this time. The received texts give the impression that chariot warfare was never well developed in Wu, even after this recorded diplomatic mission.

91. The famous "Battle of Boju" (*Zuo's Commentary*, Ding 4, 506 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1542–47).

Among the four major states, Chu was often considered barbaric by inheritors of the Zhou city-state system during the early part of the Eastern Zhou period, even though Chu's splendid achievements in literature, art, and technology in many ways surpassed those of the northern states.⁹² Among the four states, Chu also displayed the greatest disregard for Zhou political authority. Chu had challenged the Western Zhou political order ever since mid-Western Zhou (see chapter 2). The ruler of Chu had proclaimed himself king at the end of the tenth century BCE, and the Chu kings ever since had considered their status equal to that of the Zhou kings—that is, above that of the dukes of the other city-states.⁹³ During the Eastern Zhou period, Chu conquered over sixty states, and at the height of its power its territory comprised almost half of ancient China.⁹⁴ Chu was also the earliest major state to adopt a bureaucratic form of government.⁹⁵ This partly had to do with its vast territory, but it had also to do with the Chu rulers' self-regard as equals of the Zhou rulers and consequent need to demonstrate that equality by adopting a similar mode of governance.⁹⁶ State power in Chu rested in the hands of its kings.⁹⁷ By comparison, in Jin and Qi (and in most of the other successors of the Western Zhou city-states), the aristocrats controlled the offices and armies, to such an extent that the army became the personal property of the aristocratic lineages. In Chu, however, after the establishment of the commandery-county system in the seventh century BCE,⁹⁸ offices were mostly nonhereditary and military commanders were only appointed in times of war.⁹⁹ Chu did have a very strong aristocracy because the senior offices in Chu were reserved for royal descendants and a few aristocratic lineages¹⁰⁰; but the otherwise nonhereditary aspect of the system ensured that no lineage could accumulate enough political and military power to challenge the king. Chu was able to dominate early to mid-Eastern Zhou politics not only because of its more pragmatic military strategy, but also because it had more sophisticated institutions than the other major states.

92. Cook and Major (1999); Gao (1996); Lawton (1991); Wen (1990); and Zhang and Yuan (2005), among others, offer a glimpse into the enormous scholarly interest in Chu culture.

93. Yet *Zuo's Commentary*, and many other received texts, refers to the king of Chu as *zi*, a low aristocratic rank, an expression of the authors' or compilers' contempt.

94. Blakeley (1999).

95. Creel (1964); Y. Li (2002, pp. 4–5, 122–38).

96. A story in *Grand Historian* ("History of Zhou"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 155) relates that King Zhuang of Chu (r. 613–591 BCE) requested through the Zhou king's envoy that the Zhou king pass on his sacred "Nine Cauldrons" to Chu. His request being refused, King Zhuang shot back: "Do not prevent me from getting the Nine Cauldrons. The tips of the weapons in my country yield enough metal for casting the Nine Cauldrons." The Nine Cauldrons "represented the Heavenly Mandate, . . . [and] symbolized the Zhou lineage's authority to cast sacred bronze vessels for communication with heaven" (Cook 1999, p. 67).

97. Li and Li (1999, pp. 281–44); Thatcher (1977–78, p. 141).

98. Gu and Zhu (2001, p. 284); Y. Li (1999, pp. 296–310).

99. Thatcher (1977–78, p. 145).

100. For example, Shen was one of the most important counties of Chu, and was alternately ruled by several aristocratic families and the princes of the king's house (Gu and Zhu 2001, p. 279). The other Chu counties had a similar succession pattern (Y. Li 2002, pp. 128–38).

Qin, the state that unified China in 221 BCE, was a latecomer. According to *Grand Historian* (History of Qin), Qin people originated as herders, similarly to the Rong and Di peoples.¹⁰¹ In comparison with Qi and Jin, the Qin people were less constrained by Western Zhou rituals and ethics.¹⁰² After the Zhou ruling house relocated to Chengzhou, Qin fought Rong for domination in the Wei River valley over many generations. To survive in the tough warring environment, Qin rulers became highly pragmatic and aggressive. To ensure the stability of the regime, the Qin rulers tended to pass on the succession to the most capable rather than to the eldest of their sons.¹⁰³ In Qin, the state was traditionally strong, and the royal and aristocratic lineages were very weak.¹⁰⁴ Among the four major states, Qin was also the most “backward” in its cultural development. No ancient China philosophies originated in Qin, for example. This backwardness, however, also gave Qin an important strength. Qin was the most open of the major states to new ideas and to talents from afar, both of which greatly strengthened Qin’s capacity in military competition and warfare.

Qi was established in the very early stage of the Western Zhou dynasty by the Jiang people, who were important allies of the Western Zhou court. The Jiang people’s early colonization efforts met with strong local resistance.¹⁰⁵ To ease the tension, early Qi rulers adapted to the local culture, which was quite different from the Western Zhou tradition. Moreover, during early colonization, population density in the region was low, and the land was too poor to grow crops. The Qi founders therefore encouraged their people to engage in fishing, weaving, salt production, and crafts.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Qi developed a strong commercial tradition. During early Eastern Zhou, Qi rose to become a formidable power, owing to reforms carried out by Guan Zhong under Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–643 BCE). During late Eastern Zhou, Guan Zhong’s admirers compiled a book entitled *Guanzi*,¹⁰⁷ which some scholars believe presents the thought of Guan Zhong.¹⁰⁸

101. Chinese historians have debated the origin of Qin. Some believe that the Qin people originated as herders in the west; others argue that they migrated to the Wei River valley from the east and acquired the pastoral culture in the process. See Chen (2005, pp. 133–80) for a lengthy review of the debate.

102. *Grand Historian* (“History of Qin”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 192) records a meeting between Duke Mu of Qin and Youyu (the envoy of a Rong king). In the meeting, Youyu praised Rong culture highly and identified sophistication as the source of the conflicts among ancient China’s states. *Grand Historian* also records that Duke Mu had treated Youyu as a sage and Duke Mu’s approval of Youyu’s sentiments.

103. This mostly occurred between the reigns of Duke Wu (r. 697–678 BCE) and Duke Mu (r. 659–621 BCE). During this period the Qin rulers exclusively passed the succession to able brothers in order to maintain political stability. In *Gongyang Commentary* (Zhao 5, 537 BCE; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 2318) there is a remark that Qin “selected the valiant ones as heirs.”

104. He (1996).

105. *Grand Historian* (“History of Qi”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1480–82) contains an entry saying that in order to arrive safely at Yingqiu, the Jiang people traveled at night and arrived at dawn. By then, however, the local people were already mobilized against the newcomers.

106. *Grand Historian* (“History of Qi”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1477–514).

107. It is believed that the majority of writings in *Guanzi* were produced by the scholars of the Jixia Academy (Rickett 1993, pp. 247–48). For more on the Academy, see chapter 8.

108. Hsiao (1979, pp. 320–22); Qiu et al. (2003, pp. 64–93).

The chapters on Qi in the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*) focus exclusively on Guan Zhong's crucial role in raising Qi to its hegemonic status. Although it is hard to distinguish Guan Zhong's original ideas and reforms from those credited to him by later compliers, it is certain that his reforms had greatly strengthened Qi's commerce and agricultural productivity and its ability to raise taxes in order to support a larger standing army. Guan Zhong was greatly admired and his reforms turned Qi into a great power, giving us a sense of how significant the reforms proved to be.

Jin originated from a colony established by the younger brother of King Cheng of Western Zhou (r. ca. 1042/35–1006 BCE).¹⁰⁹ It was founded in a region formerly controlled by an indigenous state named Tang, and surrounded by various herder groups (Rong and Di).¹¹⁰ The new colonizers had to rule the place by respecting local politics, intermarrying with the Rong and Di peoples,¹¹¹ and sharing power with the indigenous aristocrats.¹¹² All these had shaped Jin's culture and style of politics. Jin had adopted an expansionist policy beginning in the eighth century BCE. It was one of the earliest Western Zhou city-states to have a standing army,¹¹³ and it pioneered reforms in social organization, state structure, and military institutions.¹¹⁴ Jin's aggressive state policy and associated reform measures allowed it to maintain a hegemonic status for almost a hundred years after the reign of Duke Wen of Jin. Jin was also unique in that not all the major Jin aristocratic lineages sprang from the ducal line. This might have been the case because the indigenous aristocrats were already quite strong at the time of Jin's colonization, but it also was related to Jin's history. In 745 BCE, Duke Zhao of Jin (r. 745–739 BCE) bestowed an area named Quwo on his uncle (Huanshu). According to lineage law, Huanshu's line belonged to the Minor Lineage while Duke Zhao's line was of the Major Lineage. Soon a major conflict erupted between the two lineages, with the Minor Lineage victorious in 679 BCE. The protracted warfare actually strengthened Jin's military muscle. Moreover, from then on, the

109. *Grand Historian* ("History of Jin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1635–88).

110. See Li and Li (1999) for Jin history.

111. *Zuo's Commentary* (Ding 4, 506 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1539) contains the following account: "When Jin was just established, the Jin rulers governed the state by relying on the Xia tradition, and regulating their relationships with the Rong and Di peoples by following the local customs." In this account Xia is supposedly the first major dynasty, preceding Shang, and the local Tang people are regarded as Xia descendants. This is in accord with the general pacification and co-optation efforts of the earlier Western Zhou rulers in the newly occupied territories. See also Du (1992, pp. 486–95) for a similar discussion.

112. Li and Li (1999, p. 8).

113. As mentioned earlier, Jin developed its first standing army in 678 BCE.

114. The *Discourses of the States* ("Discourses of Jin 4"; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, p. 371) relates that Duke Wen began reform measures soon after his return from exile. The reform measures included (1) selecting and promoting officials based on merit; (2) writing off old debts, lowering taxes, providing support to the poor, and encouraging agricultural production; (3) lowering commercial taxes and constructing roads to encourage trade; (4) establishing rules and regulations to guide government operation.

Jin rulers no longer trusted their own kin, and increasingly relied on non-kin aristocracies to govern the state.

A comparison of the four most powerful states during the early to mid-Eastern Zhou yields two patterns. Jin and Qi fall under the first pattern. Even though Jin and Qi were able to adopt pragmatic policies to aid their war efforts, their cultures remained deeply rooted in the traditions of the Western Zhou. When the two states became dominant, instead of challenging the Zhou political order, they therefore tried to legitimize their hegemony by acting as the protectors of a declining Zhou political system. Their dukes had much less power vis-à-vis their aristocracies than did the dukes of Chu and Qin. When Jin and Qi expanded their territories, the newly conquered land was more likely to be taken over by one or a few of the aristocratic lineages than by the state. Such a situation triggered a “feudal crisis”¹¹⁵ in both states. In Jin, three aristocratic lineages eliminated the rest of aristocratic lineages and then divided Jin into three new states (the states of Wei, Han, and Zhao mentioned earlier in 453 BCE). In Qi, one aristocratic family rose to the dukedom by eliminating the other aristocratic lineages and expropriating the ducal family. No similar crisis erupted in either Chu or Qin.

Chu and Qin represent the second pattern. From mid-Western Zhou on, Chu had challenged Zhou’s political authority and had aspired to become a hegemon among the states. In Chu, both the state and the bureaucracy were strong, which helped it avoid a “feudal crisis.” Like Chu’s, Qin’s culture was quite different from that of Western Zhou. But whereas Chu’s relative independence from Western Zhou originated in its hegemonic aspirations, Qin’s relative independence was the result of its prolonged struggles with the herder states and tribes in the Wei River valley.¹¹⁶ Like Chu, Qin had traditionally vested much power in the state. Therefore, the “feudal crisis” that plagued Jin and Qi and other Western Zhou city-states did not happen in Qin as well. Unlike Chu, the strength of the state in Qin did not proceed from a strong bureaucratic tradition, but from the tradition of a weak aristocracy, derived from the Rong-Di culture.¹¹⁷

115. See chapter 5 for more details on the concept and on the historical process.

116. “Tribe” is a highly misused concept. Many scholars, however, still consider it a useful ideal-type that captures the nature of social organization in nomadic or other earlier societies. Without stepping into the muddy waters of definition, this book simply defines tribe as a segmentary and unilineal political unit consisting of several bands, each containing as many as a few hundred people. It is unilineal because membership in the tribe is always determined by factual or fictive consanguinity (Hansen 2000, p. 13). See Fried (1983, p. 471) for a more extended definition of tribe, which includes its economic and cultural characteristics.

117. See figure 5.1 in chapter 5 for evidence of Qin’s weak aristocratic tradition.

PERIODIZATION

Between 770 and 221 BCE fundamental changes occurred in China in the military, political, and social spheres. In this section, I propose a tripartite periodization scheme that reflects the nature of the historical transformations. I also attempt to reveal the underlying engines of social change in each of the three periods. This narrative will also summarize a few of the major analyses and arguments that are more fully discussed in Part III of the book. As befits a summary, the narrative will omit many historical details.

Although the exact date of the division will always be subject to debate, all historians accept a two-period dissection of Eastern Zhou history: the Spring and Autumn period, and the Warring States period. As mentioned earlier, the name Spring and Autumn (*chunqiu*) was derived from the title of a chronicle of the history of Lu (i.e., the *Spring and Autumn Annals*) between 722 and 481 BCE. Accordingly, many historians use 481 BCE as the date separating the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period.¹¹⁸ The choice of this date is not wholly arbitrary, because the discontinuation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in itself reflected important changes in Eastern Zhou society. Ever since the reign of Duke Wen of Lu (r. 626–609 BCE), the politics of Lu had been increasingly under the thumbs of its three powerful Huan lineages. By the time of Duke Ai of Lu (r. 494–467 BCE), these lineages almost completely dominated Lu politics. Duke Ai (literally, “sorrowful duke”) went into exile following his failed attempt to dispossess the three Huans, and died soon after. The dukes who succeeded Duke Ai held only ceremonial positions. But Lu was not the only state to experience the collapse of the feudal order. In the same century, aristocratic families in Jin, Qi, Zheng, and Song had grown so powerful that they took over governance and established a state of their own. The discontinuation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* thus signaled the collapse of the feudal order.

Although 481 BCE serves as a convenient divider in Eastern Zhou history, the change from the Spring and Autumn period to Warring States period did not happen overnight. Despite the dramatic takeovers by the powerful aristocracies, which occurred mostly at the turn of the fifth century BCE, the collapse of the feudal order was a slow process. In fact, some of the major developments of the Warring States period, such as the state bureaucracies, the large-scale water projects, and the commercialized economies, originated during the Spring and Autumn period. To capture the transition, I propose a tripartite periodization of the Eastern Zhou era: the Age of Hegemons (770–546 BCE), the Age of Transition (545–420 BCE), and the Age of Total War (419–221 BCE).

118. See Fan (1989); Hsu (1999); and Lewis (1999a). Other chronological markers have also been proposed. Guo Moruo (1954) adopted 475 BCE as the dividing date; Jin Jingfang (1983, p. 200) opted for 453 BCE, the year when Jin was split into three states.

The Age of Hegemons begins in 770 BCE with the decline of the Western Zhou political order and the strengthening of the major city-states. With the increase in strength came growing ambition, prompting these states to battle for dominance. At this stage, no state was strong enough to conquer all the others. They could expand their territories not aiming to establish a unified empire but, rather, to become hegemonic, that is, to gain enough power to intervene in the affairs of other states as they wished. Much like a Western Zhou king, a hegemon would intrude in the affairs of minor states to pursue their own advantage on matters ranging from domestic politics (such as succession) to interstate relations. Except for Chu, all the bidders for hegemony took it upon themselves to boost their legitimacy by acting as a protector of the Zhou royal house, which, as noted earlier, delayed a total demise of the Zhou political order. During this period, we see the expansion of the commandery-county administration system,¹¹⁹ an increase in the scale of warfare, and the emergence of efficiency as a primary goal. We also observe state-initiated reforms in military organizations, state structures, land-tenure system, taxation, and economic policies. These reforms were all put in place for two purposes—to win more wars and to maintain the authority of the dukes.

Under the hegemonic system, the states faced some intrinsic problems.¹²⁰ Although bureaucratic forms of governance had been adopted by some states, the dominant political mode at the time remained feudal, in the sense that an aristocrat serving as a state minister would also be granted one or more military strongholds to rule and would maintain one or more private armies.¹²¹ Since the titles and powers that the aristocratic lineages possessed could be inherited, some aristocratic lineages grew powerful enough to completely control a state's politics, both internal and interstate. The small states did not have much territory to parcel out to their aristocratic lineages; the problem increased with the size of a state. It was the most serious for the hegemonic states, which had acquired large territories by conquest and had rewarded the aristocratic army leaders with grants of the land they had won. In the end, not only the feudal order but the hegemonic order collapsed, destroyed by the powerful lineages.

The end of the Age of Hegemons came in 546 BCE. In that year, two rival hegemonic states—Jin and Chu—together with many smaller states reached a truce. Chu needed the truce because it was being seriously challenged by Wu and did not want to face powerful enemies on two fronts. Jin craved peace because the powerful Jin aristocratic lineages, embroiled in serious domestic strife, were no longer much interested in interstate politics. Yet the peace agreement only

119. The early commandery-county system contained many bureaucratic elements that flourished under later Legalism. More details on the system will follow.

120. By now, the major states had all turned into multicity city-states.

121. This has been called "secondary feudalization" (see chapter 4).

spurred the collapse of the hegemonic system, which ushered in the Age of Transition (545–420 BCE).

The Age of Transition started with the deepening of the feudal crisis and ended with the rise of bureaucratic territorial states. After the 546 BCE truce, Chu faced an increasingly alarming challenge from Wu. Yet, once Chu no longer posed a threat to Jin, the *raison d'être* for the powerful Jin lineages to maintain unity vanished. The six most powerful aristocratic ministers saw to the further weakening of the “feudal order” by eliminating the aristocrats who originated from the ducal lines. Having accomplished that, they turned on each other. The three aristocratic lineages that survived the struggle divided Jin in 453 BCE, and the resulting three new states, Wei, Zhao, and Han (known as the Three Jins), were to become the major players in the final act of Eastern Zhou.

Since Chu and Jin no longer behaved as hegemons after the 546 BCE truce, several second-rank powers started to bid for hegemonic status but invariably failed. Moreover, the small-to-medium size states, once free of the control of the hegemons, began to settle their scores with each other, thereby increasing the number of wars fought among neighboring states in this period. Most importantly, once unchecked by hegemons, the aristocrats of the smaller states were able overtly to enhance their power at the expense of the dukes in such states as Qi, Lu, Song, Wey, and Zheng. Jin’s “feudal crisis” was not unique, nor was Duke Ai of Lu’s sad story.

In this second period of Eastern Zhou, increasing hostilities also stimulated other kinds of social change. First, with the decline of ducal power came a collapse of the system of aristocratic education which had existed perhaps since the beginning of Western Zhou. Scholars started to earn a living by offering private tutoring. They also wrote essays expressing their views on subjects ranging from current politics to the moral foundations of society. Some of these people, later known as Legalists and Strategists, would play a major role in politics. Second, many reforms, such as the institutionalization of private ownership of land, establishment of coded law, meritocratic selection of officials, and a special military tax (*fu*), were well under way. These reforms provided inspiration and lessons to the later rulers, and paved the way for more sweeping reforms later. Third, military organization and tactics underwent major changes. Infantry surged in numbers and in importance, as did naval power. Professional military strategists came into being. Armies and fleets escalated in numbers, battles became increasingly complicated, and wars lasted longer. Fourth, several large-scale water projects, mainly to be used for military purposes, were initiated by the State of Wu. Finally, commerce, which had begun in the Age of Hegemons, became manifest in this period, and the merchant class thereby acquired a certain political power.

Since the heads of the new states emerging after the “feudal crisis” had all arisen from old aristocratic lineages, the new rulers knew keenly the weaknesses of the feudal political order. Therefore all the newly emerging states remodeled

the earlier commandery-county system into a full-fledged bureaucracy with paid officials and clearly defined civil functions. After such a remodeling, political power became centralized and the states were able to institute far-reaching changes. Motivating all these changes and alteration was the need to gain the upper hand in the onrushing Age of Total War (419–221 BCE).

The Age of Total War was in many ways inaugurated by waves of Legalist reforms begun in Wei, one of the Three Jins. These Legalist changes drew inspiration from predecessors dating back as far as the beginning of Eastern Zhou. The Legalist changes, however, differed greatly from their predecessors, being ideologically guided and more systematic. They were intended to establish a totalistic regime, one that could maximize both revenues and manpower in order to win in a winner-take-all kind of war.¹²² We do not know exactly when the reforms began, although in Wei, they must have been well under way by 419 BCE. I take 419 BCE as the start of the Age of Total War because in that year, Wei started to expand westward, triggering years of hostilities with Qin.

During the Age of Total War, freed from the constraints of the feudal political order and facilitated by greatly increased state capacity, the warring states' territorial ambitions expanded and intensified and they quickly altered the nature of warfare. Until then, interstate wars had been fought mainly for economic benefits and political dominance. In the Age of Total War acquiring territory and weakening enemies became primary goals. The wars became increasingly brutal. They were total wars in the sense that a large percentage of the able-bodied males of a state would be mobilized to fight, and to lose a major battle might well be an irrecoverable demographic disaster.

Military commanders and civil officials were further differentiated, and the "art of war" grew more sophisticated. Large-scale road systems and water projects also mushroomed, for the purposes of both military transportation and irrigation, which ultimately also served the purposes of war because states with higher agricultural productivity tended to fight better. Commerce also took off at this stage. Money was in widespread use and highly commercialized metropolitan cities appeared. Some merchants became prominent in politics, "modern" economic theories began to appear.

After Wei's successful—that is, self-strengthening—programs, it dominated the warring states for almost a half century. Wei's aggression forced the other states to similarly transform themselves, triggering waves of reform in the major warring states. Apart from Wei, the reform waves continued for over fifty years, between 403 and 350 BCE, most thoroughly in Qin in 356 and 350 BCE. Qin's self-strengthening, led by Lord Shang Yang (d. 338 BCE), included overall bureaucracy, a military achievement based promotion system, a set of draconian legal codes, a new landholding system, the establishment of a taxation system based

122. Tsou (1991).

on small family structure,¹²³ and the adoption of uniform systems of weights and measures.¹²⁴ These reforms greatly enhanced state capacity, which enabled Qin to organize itself into a militarist state. Qin maintained its military superiority over the other warring states, and by 221 BCE, all the other states had been conquered or had surrendered and China was unified. The success of the reform allowed Qin also to use its newly acquired power for other purposes. Even before 221 BCE, Qin rulers had begun to suppress economic and scholarly activities of which they disapproved. In the end, the wars of the Eastern Zhou period benefited the power of the state.

In the next five chapters, we will consider in greater detail how the continual warfare in conjunction with other structural conditions shaped the history of each of the three periods of Eastern Zhou. This author will focus on the logic of Eastern Zhou development by means of in-depth analyses of crucial developments during each of the three periods.

SUMMARY

Like the preceding chapter, this one sets the stage for fuller and deeper analyses. I assert, based on available data, that the Chinese population might have increased about threefold between the eighth and third centuries BCE, and that population growth did not seem to have played a crucial role in shaping Eastern Zhou history. I also claim that, Western Zhou having experienced a large influx of nonagrarian peoples from the north, that influx decreased during Eastern Zhou as northern China's climate entered a prolonged warmer phase. In other words, Eastern Zhou's historical development was largely driven by internal forces rather than by interactions between the Chinese and the people of the steppes.

The chapter then moves on to characteristics of the early Chinese city-states that are crucial for understanding Eastern Zhou history. Most important in that regard is that, perhaps with the exception of Chu, the early Eastern Zhou city-states were not run by bureaucracies and had no standing armies. These city-states began as lineage-based organizations with dukes acting as lineage heads. The city-states' lineage-based origins delayed the differentiation between state and family in politics and strengthened the kinship-based culture of China. Kinship-based society offered fertile ground for the later rise of Confucianism, a philosophy that sees the foundation of a good society in a family-centered political order. Moreover, in the Western Zhou court, enfeoffed and lineage-based city-states also made salient two kinds of identities among the city dwellers: a pan-Zhou identity and a kinship-based

123. The tax rate would be doubled for families with two adult sons.

124. See chapter 7 for more detail on the Legalist reform measures and their consequences.

identity. Unlike their Greek counterparts, city dwellers in China did not possess a territory-based identity, and the Chinese city-states were not territorial states. The salience of pan-Zhou and kinship-based identities and the absence of place-based identity among the city dwellers had the following implications: during the Age of Total War, although all the major city-states had developed into territorial states, the social relations caged into these states were not yet territory-based. Even though the interstate wars turned increasingly brutal, neither patriotism nor any other place-based identity took root in early China. Consequently, people accepted “foreign” rulers with little psychological aversion, and local scholars frequently traveled to other states to attain better positions, both of which were conducive to the unification of China.

This chapter then proceeds to briefly introduce the origins, geographies, and cultural/political features of the major Eastern Zhou city-states, as well as a tripartite periodization of Eastern Zhou history. The tripartite periodization starts with the Age of Hegemons (770–546 BCE), during which militarily more successful city-states were competing for significance within the Zhou political framework, and improvising rudimentary forms of bureaucratic government and other governing structures, largely for the purpose of winning wars. Following the Age of Hegemons was the period I have named the Age of Transition (545–420 BCE), during which in most militarily successful city-states the ducal power was undermined by the rising power of the aristocratic lineages and the decline of the feudal order. The last of the three periods is the Age of Total War (419–221 BCE), in which full-fledged bureaucratically governed territorial states emerged and achieved the capacity to wage wars that mobilized the majority of the adult male population and the country’s resources and lasted for months or even years. By virtue of the Qin conquest, total war facilitated China’s unification.

This author ventures to affirm that the tripartite periodization is not just a better scheme for conveying the contours of development of the Eastern Zhou states as well as the changing patterns of their interactions. It also reveals the logic of Eastern Zhou economic and ideological developments, which could not be conveyed by the conventional twofold periodization (i.e., the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods).

PART III

War-Driven Dynamism in the Eastern Zhou Era

The Age of Hegemons (770–546 BCE)

After retreating to the eastern capital, Chengzhou, the Western Zhou ruling house could no longer effectively control the city-states. Soon ambitious dukes of some of the city-states began attempting to build new cities, to annex smaller city-states, and to control the weaker city-states, thereby launching the endemic warfare of the Eastern Zhou era. At the beginning of the Age of Hegemons, as we saw in chapter 3, most of the ducal states were small. At most, a state only controlled a few cities—sometimes only one—and the land immediately surrounding them. The land between these city-states was sparsely populated by hunters and gatherers, agriculturalists, tribesmen, and herders; some of these country dwellers were escapees from the city-states. Most states, even the stronger ones, such as Jin, Qi, Lu, Zheng, and Song, did not yet have standing armies. Only at times of war did a state summon city dwellers to the ancestral temple, where weapons were distributed and city dwellers were mobilized to fight.

The coexistence of many states continuously at odds with each other facilitated the formation of a hegemonic system of interstate relations. The first two sections of this chapter analyze the nature of this interstate system, identifying the major state actors and their changing strengths over time.¹ The third section discusses warfare during the Age of Hegemons and the role of ritual in it. With the intensification of warfare, in order to win or at least to avoid total defeat, the combatants increasingly acted according to instrumental rationality. This way of thinking and acting, which emphasized the value of efficiency, was still very alien in the China of this period, but gradually expanded into other spheres of society as warfare shifted into a higher gear. This is the topic of the fourth section. All-out war destroyed many states and raised a few to dominance. For the winners, how to manage their newly expanded territories became a problem. The fifth section deals with the commandery-county and the secondary feudalization systems, two very different answers to the problems posed by territorial expansion. During the Eastern Zhou era, states sometimes fought close to home and sometimes at a distance. By computing the average “war distance” (defined as the

1. In chapter 8, I will again analyze the Eastern Zhou interstate system by comparing it with the post-1648 international system in Europe and explaining how the nature of interstate relations during the Age of Total War partly contributed to the Qin conquest of China.

distance that an army travels from its staging ground to the battleground) in a given period and how it changed over time, we can gain a more overall view of Eastern Zhou warfare, as well as an understanding of the nature and changes in the states, in state capacity, in interstate relations, and in the strategic goals of the most aggressive states. This will be the focus of the final section.

THE MYTH OF THE FIVE HEGEMONS

Since no state was strong enough to conquer all the others, the most important motive for war was to achieve dominance. Once a state had forced other states into submission, it attempted to institutionalize its dominance, leading to the rise of a hegemonic system of interstate relations. Under this system a hegemon protected the subordinate states, which in return contributed troops and supplies in times of war and bowed to the wishes of the hegemons in matters ranging from succession to interstate politics. Except for Chu, the other early hegemons or would-be hegemons sought legitimacy by protecting the Zhou court and acting in the name of the Zhou royal house. The hegemonic system thus helped to preserve the Zhou court and prolonged the Western Zhou tradition when the Zhou state's influence was falling in the face of the ever-increasing military prowess of many of the competing states.

What were the hegemonic states of early Eastern Zhou? Warring States thinkers, such as Mozi and Xunzi, identified five hegemons of the Spring and Autumn period: Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–643 BCE), Duke Wen of Jin (r. 636–628 BCE), King Zhuang of Chu (r. 613–591 BCE), King Helü of Wu (r. 514–496 BCE), and King Goujian of Yue (r. 496–465 BCE).² The reigns of the first three hegemons were more or less contiguous, as were the reigns of the last two. But no hegemonic states existed in the seventy-seven years between the death of King Zhuang of Chu and the beginning of the reign of King Helü of Wu. Modern historians, too, posit the existence of five hegemons during the Spring and Autumn period, though they differ about which five rulers qualify for the title.³ The sectional titles in Hsu Cho-yun's introduction to Spring and Autumn history make patent such a general conviction: "The Leadership of Zheng,"⁴ "The Leadership of Qi," "The Leadership of Jin," "The Emergence of Chu," and "The Rise of Wu and Yue."⁵ Contrary to the Warring States thinkers, Hsu raised Zheng to hegemon status and combined Wu and Yue into a single hegemonic entity. Mainland Chinese historians are generally agreed with Hsu. For example, Jin Jingfang identifies Qi, Jin, Qin, Chu, and

2. *Xunzi* ("Wangba 11"; reproduced in Wang 1988, p. 205) and *Mozi* ("Suoran"; reproduced in Zhang 1988, p. 7).

3. See Chao (1992); Gu and Zhu (2001); Jin (1983); and Xu (1996); among others, on their identifications of the five hegemons.

4. Under Duke Zhuang of Zheng.

5. Hsu (1999).

Wu-Yue as hegemonic states; Gu Derong and Zhu Shunlong regard Zheng as only a minor hegemonic state, not on a par with the full hegemony of Qi, Jin, Chu, Wu, and Yue.⁶ In short, some minor differences notwithstanding,⁷ ancient as well as modern scholars are in general agreement that (1) hegemonic politics started with Duke Zhuang of Zheng and ended with King Goujian of Yue, and (2) at any given time during this period there existed only one hegemon.⁸

Contra these scholars, in this and the following sections, I claim that this five-hegemon classification is a myth and that early bidders for hegemony, such as Duke Zhuang of Zheng and Duke Huan of Qi, were able to dominate only their adjacent and nearby states. In chapter 5, I will make the case that hegemonic politics, both as a system of interstate relations and an engine of history, collapsed after the 546 BCE truce agreement. Wu and Yue lacked both the military strength and geopolitical advantages to qualify as hegemons. Moreover, the engine that drove history after the 546 BCE truce agreement was no longer hegemonic politics but the feudal crisis and the development of states that were virtually bureaucracies.

The bias of modern historians stems from the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Zuo's Commentary*. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is a chronologically ordered history of Lu between 722 and 481 BCE, and *Zuo's Commentary* is the longest and most valuable commentary on the very terse *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Although *Zuo's Commentary* covers the history of early China far beyond the state of Lu, its focus is on Lu and its neighbors. Therefore, although Chu, Jin, and Qin were comparative powerhouses, they do not appear in *Zuo's Commentary's* first twelve years of records because during these years, these states were still fighting local wars that did not impinge on Lu. Chu and Jin make their first appearance in *Zuo's Commentary* 710 BCE (Huan 2). As the spheres of influence of these three powerhouses extended to Lu, they begin to appear in *Zuo's Commentary* more frequently and in more detailed accounts. Because *Zuo's Commentary* has been by far the most important source of information on this period but provides detailed descriptions of events only in Lu and its neighboring states (particularly Zheng, Qi, Song, Wey, Chen, Ju, and, later on, Jin and Chu), an impression has been created that hegemonic politics began in those states. My research, however, indicates that there were four more or less separate theaters of war in ancient China, existing roughly before 643 BCE: the Qi theater in the central-eastern region, the Chu theater in the south, the Jin theater in the north, and the Qin theater in

6. Gu and Zhu (2001); Jin (1983, pp. 223–24).

7. Duke Xiang of Song (r. 650–637 BCE) was also regarded by some Chinese historians as one of the five hegemons.

8. Among all the bidders for hegemony, only Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin were strongly endorsed by the Zhou court. Therefore, some scholars suggest that only two hegemons existed during the Spring and Autumn period (Rosen 1978, p. 99). Like most historians, I consider “hegemon” to be a status backed by a state’s military strength rather than an honorific title recognized by the Zhou king.

Table 4.1. Major states involved in the four theaters of war before 643 BCE

Qi theatre	Qi, Lu, Zheng, Song, Wey, Chen, Cai, Cao, Rong, Tan, Sui, Ji, Zhu, Xiaozhu, Ju, Xing, Xu, Xue, Teng, Xiang, Zou, Cheng.
Chu theater	Chu, Sui, Huang, Cai, Deng, Ba, Er, Zhen, Jiao, Xuan, Zhou, Liao, Luo, Xi, Quan, Xu, Ying, Liu, Jiang, Yong, Xiao, Lai, Shen, Lü, Tang.
Jin theater	Jin, Liang, Ji, Xun, Jia, Guo, Yu, Rui, Huo, Wey, Geng, Yuan, Han, Bi, Lushi, Wei, Jiao, Hua, Yang, Li-Rong, Dongshan gaoluoshi.
Qin theater	Qin, Gui, Ji-Rong, Luhun-Rong, Xiaoguo, Pengxishi, Dangshe, Du, Liang, Rui, Hua, Feng.

the west. In this scenario, Duke Zhuang of Zheng and Duke Huan of Qi are not hegemonies of all ancient China but local hegemonies of the Qi theater.

We do not know exactly how many states were incorporated in each of these four war theaters. Table 4.1, however, includes the major ones. States appear in two theaters because they were attacked from two sides. The states in the Qin theater are the hardest to identify because most of the states adjacent to Qin were founded by the Rong people, who were considered barbarians and only very vaguely mentioned in the received texts. Table 4.1, as a result, no doubt fails to include some of the states in the Qin theater.

The assertion that there were four theaters of war before 643 BCE departs so greatly from the conventional understanding of early Eastern Zhou history that a more rigorous justification of that claim is called for. Fortunately it can be provided. Figure 4.1 presents the patterns of war networks for wars fought between 722 and 643 BCE (a year was marked by the death of Duke Huan of Qi). In the figure, a line indicates a war fought between two states. For wars in which more than two states were engaged, the line connects the two major warring states. If two states fought three or more times in that period, these wars are indicated by a thick line. The number of lines in figure 4.1 is therefore far smaller than the actual number of wars recorded in this period. Plotting the exact spatial pattern of wars on a map, however, allows us to analyze the network pattern visually.⁹

Figure 4.1 shows that Zheng, Lu, Qi, Qin, Jin, and Chu were each linked with many other states and thus constituted the core states before 643 BCE. Among these six core states, Chu, Qin, and Jin are all in rather independent war theaters, while Zheng, Lu, and Qi are connected through so many direct and indirect network ties as to be identified as in the same war theater. The links between the four war networks are sparse, showing that they were to a certain degree independent of each other before 643 BCE. Since warfare in ancient China was fought in four

9. The received texts record more military conflicts in the area of central-eastern China during this period. Therefore, in figure 4.1 it appears as if many more wars were fought in the Qi theater than anywhere else. But even with the bias suggested by the received texts, the existence of four theaters of war is obvious.

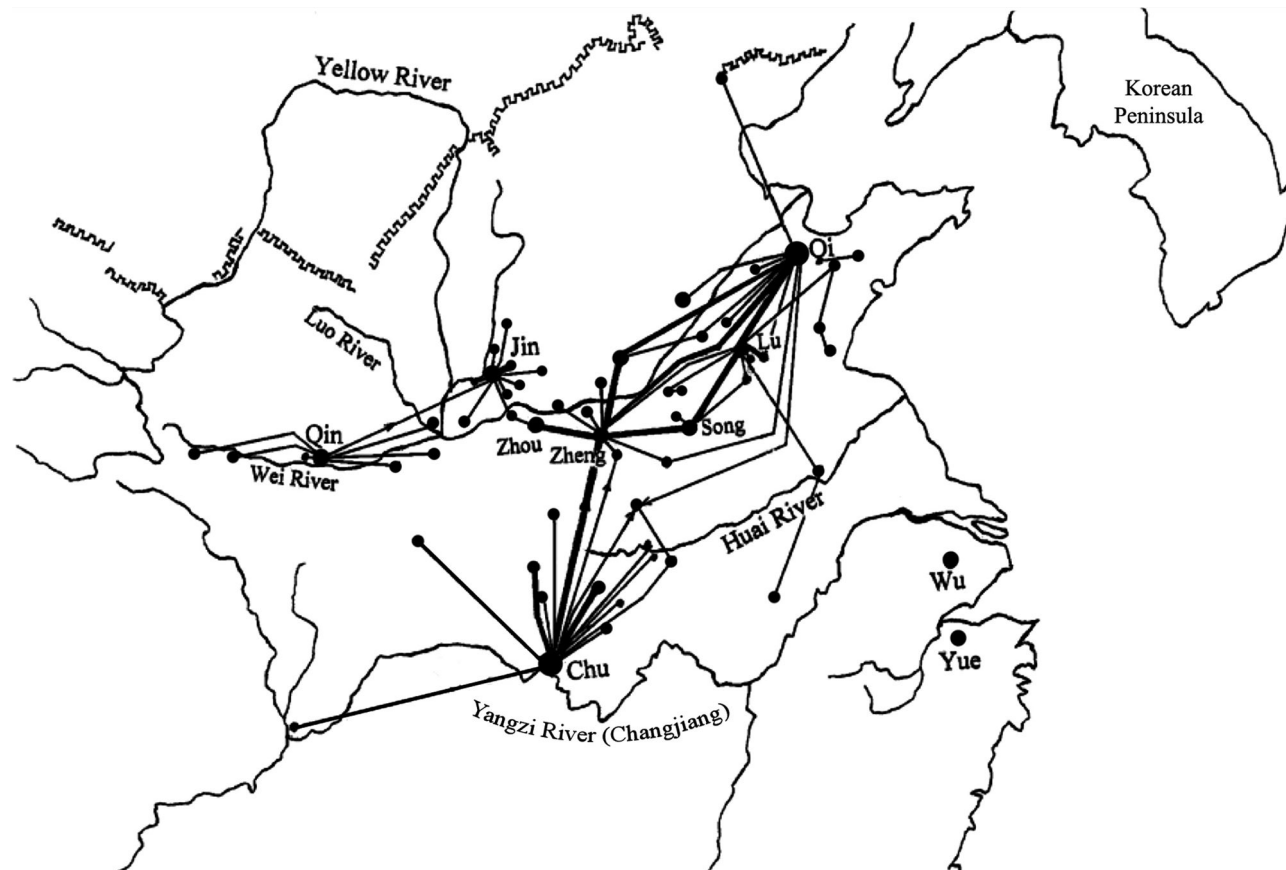


FIGURE 4.1. War networks for the years between 722 and 643 BCE

war theaters before 643 BCE, the four hegemons that emerged in each of the four theaters could have only been local hegemons.

I call the central-eastern war theater where Zheng and Lu were located the Qi theater because it was eventually dominated by Qi under Duke Huan. Qi dominance is not reflected in the war networks in figure 4.1, but it becomes clear when we examine other aspects of the war data. First, Qi waged twenty-three wars between 722 and 643 BCE,¹⁰ whereas Zheng and Lu waged only eighteen and sixteen, respectively. In the same period, Qi was attacked three times;¹¹ Zheng and Lu, nineteen and six times, respectively, in the same period. Second, nineteen of Qi's twenty-three offensive wars were waged during the reign of Duke Huan. Zheng waged fifteen of eighteen offensive wars between 722 and 701 BCE, during the reign of Duke Zhuang. Zheng's military strength was greatly diminished after the duke's death in 701 BCE. Lu launched its sixteen offensive wars at regular intervals over time; nine of them were against significantly smaller states, including Zhu (716, 704, 692, and 659 BCE), Ji (721 and 710 BCE), Cheng (686 BCE), Ju (659 BCE), and Xiang (643 BCE). Some of these states were so tiny that, had Lu not been the aggressor, they would not even have been mentioned in *Zuo's Commentary*.

All four hegemons faced great challenges on the road to dominance. In the Qi theater, Zheng had enjoyed hegemony before Qi, and early in the reign of Duke Huan, Qi still did not have military superiority over its neighbor Lu.¹² In the Jin theater, Jin split into two rival polities in 745 BCE, until the Quwo polity defeated another polity and reunified Jin in 679 BCE. Between 718 and 668 BCE, Jin was attacked three times by Guo.¹³ Di also posed a serious threat to Jin before the reign of Duke Wen.¹⁴ We know very little about events in the Qin theater during this period. *Grand Historian (Shiji)* relates that the Rong people killed Duke Qin Zhong (r. 844–822 BCE) and captured one of Qin's generals in 776 BCE.¹⁵ In 708 BCE, Qin could still be defeated by a small state.¹⁶ It was only during the reign of Duke Mu (r. 659–621 BCE) that Qin finally was able to dominate the Wei River

10. I take the number of offensive wars that a state waged as an indication of that state's military strength. Sometimes a militarily weak state will wage war against a more powerful state (e.g., Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1940). But I have measured the military strength of a state, not by a single offensive war, but by multiple offensive wars over time. A militarily weak state certainly could wage an offensive war against a strong state, but the weak state would probably lose, which would limit its ability to wage further offensive wars.

11. All the attacks occurred before and during 685 BCE, when Duke Huan of Qi came to power. No states dared to attack Qi during the reign of Duke Huan.

12. For example, in the second year of the reign of Duke Huan (684 BCE); Qi invaded Lu but was badly defeated in the Battle of Changshao (*Zuo's Commentary*, Zhuang 10; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 182–83).

13. In 718 BCE and 668 BCE, Guo invaded Jin alone, and in 703 BCE, Guo, together with four other states, invaded Jin (*Zuo's Commentary*, Yin 5, Huan 9, Zhuang 26; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 45, 125, 234).

14. Di attacked Jin in 652 and 644 BCE. In 632 and 629 BCE, under the reign of Duke Wen, Jin first established three divisions and then five armies, all of which were aimed at defense against the Di people (*Zuo's Commentary*, Xi 8, Xi 16, Xi 28, Xi 31; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 322, 370, 474, 487).

15. *Grand Historian* ("History of Qin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 178).

16. *Zuo's Commentary* (Huan 4; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 101).

valley. In the Chu theater, although Chu's military superiority was apparent from the very beginning, Chu did not dominate the entire region until quite late. In 706 BCE, Chu had to use stratagems to break Sui's alliances and defeat it. In 699 BCE, Chu was defeated by Luo and Lu Rong, and its chief minister was killed in battle. In 676–675 BCE, Chu was again seriously defeated, this time by Ba. These records, all in *Zuo's Commentary*, show that Chu's road to dominance was also a bumpy one.

The eventual hegemonies of these four states shared two characteristics. First, the states whose rulers became local hegemonies tended to free themselves from the constraints of Western Zhou rituals and codes of conduct and to adopt war strategies based on their utility or efficiency. This alone, however, was insufficient to achieve hegemony: Zheng was from the beginning an efficiency-oriented state, but it nevertheless failed to sustain hegemonic status in the Qi theater. Another element in the rise of hegemonies was geopolitics: both computer simulation and empirical analysis show that states with enemies on fewer fronts had a military advantage over states surrounded by enemies.¹⁷ Chinese historiography has attributed the decline of Zheng to its succession crises following the death of Duke Zhuang.¹⁸ But the states of Jin and Qi faced similar or more serious palace intrigues and succession crises, both before and after they attained hegemonic status. Qi, Jin, Chu, and Qin were also able to achieve dominance because they were located on China's outskirts and faced enemies on fewer fronts. Their peripheral geographic locations allowed them to retreat from interstate conflicts at the center when they were weakened, returning to the fray after regaining their strength. A state that faced potential enemies on all fronts, however, was probably forced into zero-sum conflict with one or more of its neighbors all the time. When that state lost territory or strength, regaining either was much harder.

THE FORMATION AND MERGER OF FOUR THEATERS OF WAR

At that time any state, once it had established dominion over its own region, tried to expand its influence to central China, where the Zhou capital was located. It is easy to understand why: to maintain dominance, a state needed to either conquer or manipulate the state of Zhou, which was thus far still a rallying point. As the spheres of influence of all four local hegemonies (i.e., Qi, Chu, Jin, and Qin) converged, the four theaters of war gradually merged. Chu's northward expansion of its territory and influence illustrates this point. There is a sentence in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* for the year 710 BCE that reads: "The dukes of Cai and Zheng met at Deng." *Zuo's Commentary* elaborates:¹⁹ two dukes met because they had grown perturbed about Chu's strategic intentions. As Chu continued to push farther north,

17. Artzrouni and Komlos (1996); Collins (1978, 1986).

18. Gu and Zhu (2001, pp. 54–56); Tong (2003, pp. 147–49).

19. *Zuo's Commentary* (Huan 2, 710 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 90).

Zuo's Commentary recorded more of Chu's military activities and in increasing detail. Chu's intentions could not have been clearer: to encroach on central China from two directions. It made its first advance directly to the north along the Han River. En route, Chu conquered Quan and Jiao in 700 BCE, Deng in 678 BCE, and Shen at the Nanyang Basin in 687 BCE. Outside the Nanyang Basin lies the vast Central Plain of China. The second advance was to the northeast, in the direction of the Dabie Mountains. Chu's major obstacle was Sui. *Zuo's Commentary* records three major clashes between Chu and Sui (706, 704, and 690 BCE). After battling Sui into submission, Chu conquered Xi, located at the northern edge of the Dabie Mountains, in about 685 BCE. Finally, in 684 BCE—twenty-six years after the meeting between the dukes of Cai and Zheng—Chu invaded Cai and captured its ruler, Duke Ai (r. 694–675 BCE).²⁰ In 678 BCE, Chu troops reached Zheng.

Chu was not alone in its ambition. About the same time or a little later, Qi, Jin, and Qin made similar moves toward central China. These great powers conquered many states,²¹ and the war distance expanded as they came into contact with each other along more fronts.²² The expansion of these four local hegemonies, therefore, brought the four formerly separated theaters of war into contact, inevitably triggering confrontations among them. In 656 BCE, in response to Chu's advance, Duke Huan of Qi, hegemon of the Qi theater, led the allied troops of eight states against Chu. The confrontation ended before it began, as Qi and Chu agreed to a truce, but it signifies the fusion of the central-eastern and southern theaters of war. From then on until before Duke Huan's death,²³ Qi and Chu both waged a series of wars against the states lying between them to compel those states into their respective spheres of influence.²⁴

While Qi and Chu were engaged in seesawing competition, confrontations between Qin and Jin were beginning in the north. In 645 BCE, the Qin army led by Duke Mu defeated Jin at Hanyuan, on the west side of the Yellow River, in present-day Shaanxi province.²⁵ The defeat forced Jin to increase military taxation and to begin recruiting country dwellers into the military.²⁶ Thereafter Qin and Jin fought many wars, most of which Jin won. To penetrate central China and in it the Zhou state, Qin had had to subdue Jin.

20. The duke died in captivity nine years after being captured in 675 BCE.

21. According to one estimate, Duke Huan of Qi conquered thirty-five states, Duke Xian of Jin (r. 676–651 BCE) conquered seventeen states and subjugated thirty-eight, Duke Mu of Qin conquered twelve states, and King Zhuang of Chu conquered twenty-six states (Hsu 1999, p. 567).

22. All the war distances presented in the figures of this book are estimated based on the moving average of ten military encounters.

23. Qi's power declined following Duke Huan's death, and Jin replaced Qi as Chu's major contender.

24. For example, Qi attacked Zheng twice, in 654 and 653 BCE, to coerce Zheng into an alliance with it rather than with Chu. In retaliation, Chu attacked Xu, a state loyal to Qi, to draw Qi's forces away from Zheng (*Zuo's Commentary*, Xi 6–7; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 313, 315–16).

25. Scholars are still debating where this war actually took place; some believe that it occurred on the east side of the Yellow River, at Hejin, in present-day Shanxi province.

26. The implications of these measures are discussed in chapter 7.

In 643 BCE, Duke Huan of Qi died. His death gave rise to palace intrigues and succession crises and to some diminution of Qi's power. This allowed Chu to expand farther north, where it finally encountered the equally ambitious and formidable Jin and Qin, from the north and northwest, respectively. The time between the beginning of Duke Wen of Jin's reign (636 BCE) and Duke Mu of Qin's death (621 BCE) were perhaps the most colorful years in the Age of Hegemons. Three states (Chu, Jin, and Qin), each at one point headed by a very capable ruler and competing for dominance over central China, were locked in continuous interstate intrigues. The plots and counterplots of three extraordinarily capable and ambitious local hegemonies provided much fodder for literary composition, both historical and quasi-historical. But the continued military action had a discomfiting and dismaying effect on the local populations, to say nothing of making it harder for historians to understand the nature of the interstate relations of this period.

Qin's bid for hegemonic position in central China, however, was short-lived. In the winter of 628 BCE, Qin sent a large army to attack Zheng. It was a fatal mistake, because not only was Zheng far from Qin (the distance between the two capitals was about 580 kilometers), but between the two states lay regions that were controlled by Jin. Returning home without actually engaging in a fight with Zheng, the Qin army was ambushed by the Jin army at Xiao Mountain. The entire Qin force, three-hundred chariots in total, was wiped out, making it one of the very few large and deadly engagements in the Age of Hegemons.²⁷ Jin's purpose had been to wipe out the entire Qin army, and it succeeded. As Xian Zhen, a Jin minister, argued before the war, if Jin had lost this golden opportunity to destroy the Qin army, Jin was going to be under pressure from Qin for years to come.²⁸ Although Qin continued to dominate the Wei River valley, it was unable to push back into central China for over a hundred years.

Qin's setback left only two contenders for dominance of central China—Chu and Jin. This is reflected in the change in the pattern of wars. Figure 4.2a shows the pattern of wars fought between 642 and 585 BCE, and figure 4.2b shows the pattern of wars fought between 642 and 546 BCE (i.e., from a year after the death of Duke Huan of Qi to the 546 BCE truce agreement).²⁹ The state of Wu became a major player in the system after 585 BCE, so figure 4.2a is intended to capture the pattern of wars before Wu became a major contender. Comparing figure 4.2a with figure 4.1 reveals that the four separate war theaters of earlier times had become a single, interlocked war network, with Jin and Chu unquestionably dominant

27. *Zuo's Commentary* and other early Chinese textual sources describe the scale and death toll of an early Eastern Zhou war by the numbers of chariots destroyed and captured. (Each chariot was believed to be accompanied by thirty warriors during the early Eastern Zhou era.) In other words, over 9,000 Qin warriors were killed in the battle.

28. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xi 33, 627 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 497).

29. All the patterns of warfare presented in this book are drawn following the same convention employed in figure 4.1.

(figure 4.2a and b).³⁰ Figure 4.2a and 4.2b also reveal the importance of Zheng, Song, Lu, and Qi in the wars, although these states tended to be the attacked rather than the attackers. For instance, the thick line that links Jin and Qi represents six wars, five of them initiated by Jin. Two thick lines, one linking Jin with Zheng and the other linking Chu with Zheng, represent twenty and twenty-two attacks initiated by Jin and Chu, respectively. Zheng only attacked Jin once, in 574 BCE, and only with Chu's support.³¹ During the century-long Chu-Jin rivalry, Zheng had the misfortune to be a pawn between them.

Traditional Chinese historiography, influenced by the records in the received texts, has tended to give the impression that most of the time Jin had the upper hand in the Chu-Jin rivalry.³² But Jin did not come close to matching Chu in military strength judging by the following three criteria:³³ the number of years during which Zheng allied itself with each of the two states, the aggression indexes of the two states (defined later), and the average war distance of each of the two states.

Zheng, caught in the middle of the Chu-Jin rivalry, was repeatedly forced to change allegiance. Therefore, the number of years that Zheng was allied with each of the two states might well be an indicator of the relative strengths of the two hegemonies at a particular time. Between 643 BCE and 546 BCE (when Jin and Chu arranged a truce), Zheng allied itself with Chu for forty-nine years and with Jin for forty-seven years. Yet the distance between the Chu and Zheng capitals was about 460 kilometers, whereas the distance between the Jin and Zheng capitals was only half that. That Zheng was far closer to Jin yet allied itself somewhat more with Chu suggests that Chu was probably the stronger state.³⁴

A comparison of the aggression indexes of the two states leads to the same conclusion. Here, the aggression index is calculated by the number of times a state

30. Although adding Wu to the picture somewhat complicates the pattern of war network shown in figure 4.2b, it does not alter the basic war pattern of the period.

31. *Zuo's Commentary* (Cheng 17; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 897).

32. Gu and Zhu (2001, pp. 71, 86–142); Tong (2003, pp. 216–29). Du (1990, p. 73), for example, describes Jin's continuous dominance during and after the reign of Duke Wen as “hegemon under six consecutive reigns.”

33. For example, Chu never lost the control of its territories at Xi Bugeng and Dong Bugeng, which were only about seventy kilometers from the capital of Zheng. Moreover, even in 627 BCE, when Jin's power was supposedly at its pinnacle, central China states such as Xu, Cai, and Chen were still more or less under the control of Chu. See *Zuo's Commentary* (Xi 33; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 503–4).

34. The following is a list of the periods between 643 and 546 BCE in which Zheng was allied with either Chu or Jin (constructed based on the records in *Zuo's Commentary*):

Allied with Chu	Allied with Jin
643–627 (BCE) = 16 (years)	627–618 = 9
618–606 = 12	606–603 = 3
603–602 = 1	602–598 = 4
597–586 = 11	586–576 = 10
576–570 = 6	570–565 = 5
565–564 = 1	564–564 = 0
564–562 = 2	562–546 = 16
49 years	47 years

(a)

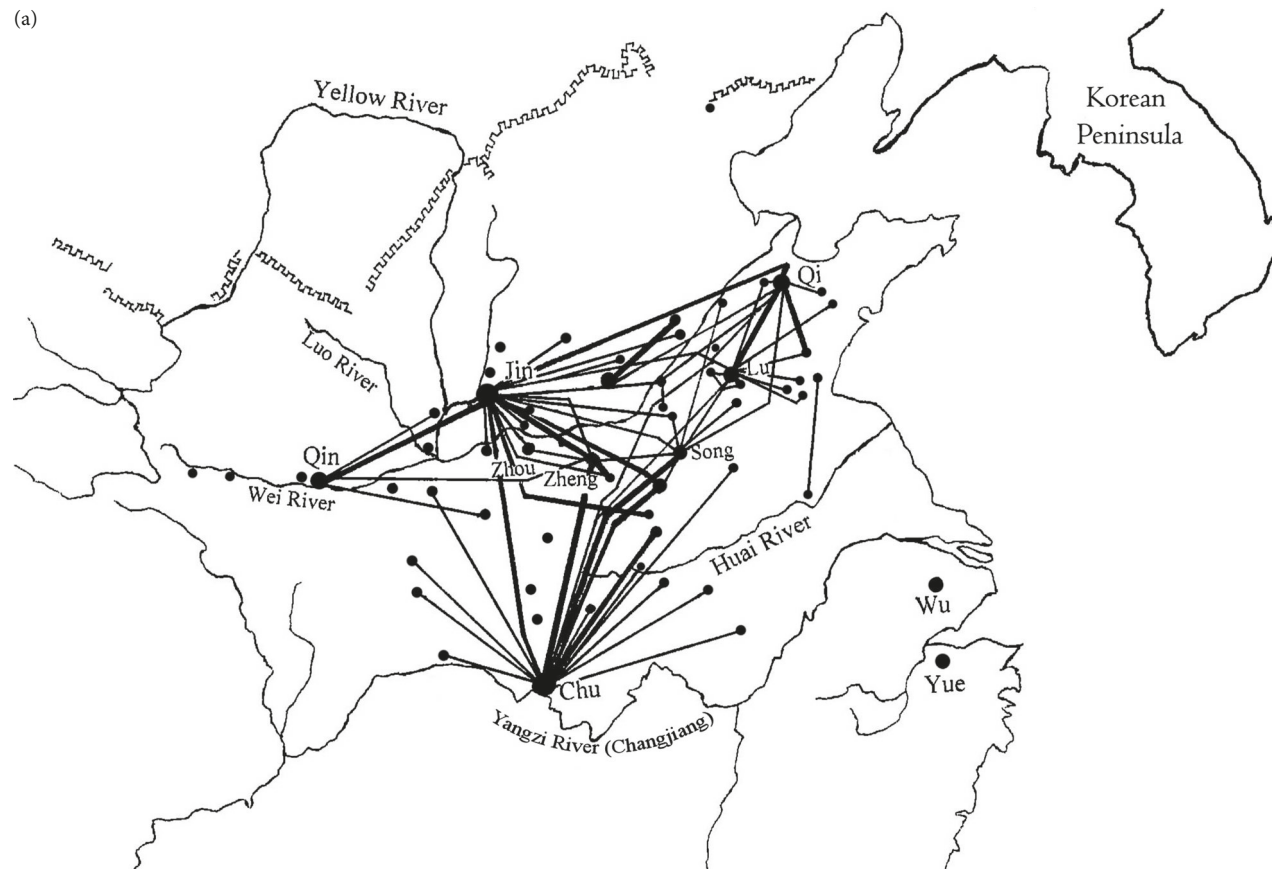


FIGURE 4.2a. War networks for the years between 642 and 585 BCE

(b)

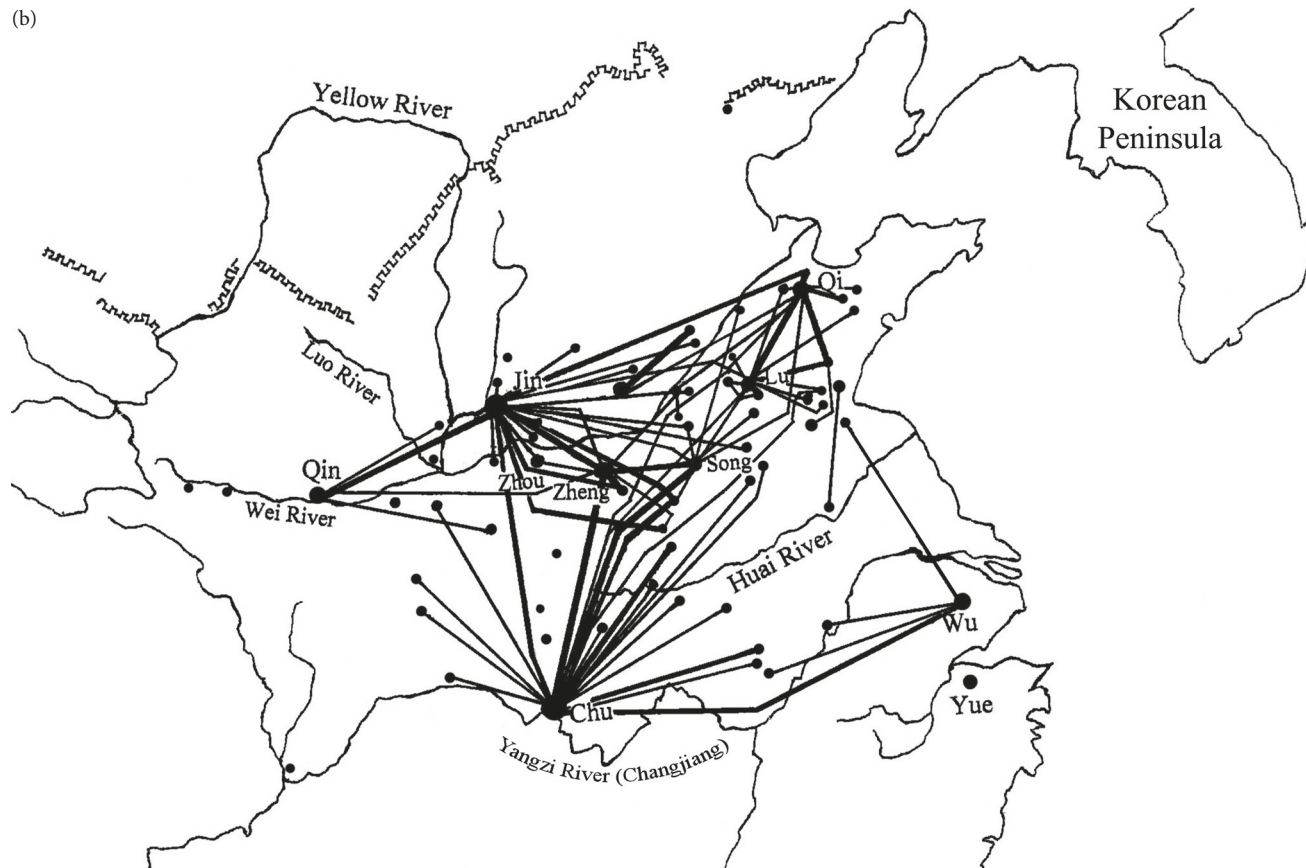


FIGURE 4.2b. War networks for the years between 642 and 546 BCE

Table 4.2. Aggression indexes showing the strengths of the four major states between 643 and 546 BCE

	Chu	Jin	Qi	Qin
Attacker	72	63	25	16
Attacked	5	22	18	8
Aggression indexes	14.4	2.9	1.4	2.0

attacked other states divided by the number of times the same state was attacked by other states. A large value for the aggression index means that a particular state was more often the attacker than the attacked, which indicates a state's military strength in a given period. Table 4.2³⁵ shows very clearly that between 643 and 546 BCE Chu waged seventy-two wars, but was only the victim of an attack five times (aggression index = 14.4). In the same period, Jin waged sixty-three wars but was attacked twenty-two times (aggression index = 2.9). For comparison, I also calculated the aggression indexes for Qi and Qin, which are 1.4 and 2.0, respectively. The relative strengths of these four major states are very clear.

During the Age of Hegemons, even the most powerful states had only a limited capacity to fight long-distance wars due to the difficulty involved in the coordination and maintenance of an effective support line. Since the capacity to coordinate and maintain an effective support line diminishes with an increase in the distance that an army travels, war distance, defined as the distance that an army travels from its staging ground to the battleground, indicates a state's military strength. I must caution that, for most wars fought during the Spring and Autumn period, the records do not specify where the staging grounds and battlegrounds were located. Even during the Warring States period, for which we do know the location of most of the battlegrounds, the staging grounds are largely still unknown. This has made it difficult to reconstruct war distances. Fortunately, we do know that most of the Spring and Autumn period battles were fought not far from the capitals of the defending states, because the countryside at the time was undefended.³⁶ Therefore, unless I had other information, I considered the capital of the defending state as the battleground. As for the staging grounds of an attacker, especially when it is a big state with multiple cities under its control, it remains difficult to identify the staging ground or garrison point. To deal with this problem, I used the attacking state's capital as the army's departure point. This inevitably results in a general overestimation of the distances. Fortunately, we are dealing here with the big states, which were

35. The war data presented in the tables and figures of this and the following chapters are much less biased than other kinds of historical materials. Still, it must be stressed again that since the war data are all extracted from extant sources, they may contain biases beyond my control.

36. Gu Donggao (1993); vol. 9, *Chunqiu zhanguo bushou biansai lun*.

able to deploy troops not from their capitals but also from frontier cities under their control. In other words, the overestimation should be regarded as a systematic error applying to all the big states. With these caveats, we construct the war distance figure (in kilometers) for the four major powers. As figure 4.3a–d shows, Qi's war distances were greater than 500 kilometers during Duke Huan's reign but dropped sharply after the duke's death. Qin's war distances were rather stable at about 300 kilometers, mainly because its road to central China was blocked by Jin. Jin's war distances were slightly higher than that of Qin or Qi (after the death of Duke Huan), fluctuating between 300 and 400 kilometers. Chu's war distances fluctuated between 400 and 600 kilometers after 648 BCE, and are unquestionably the highest of all.

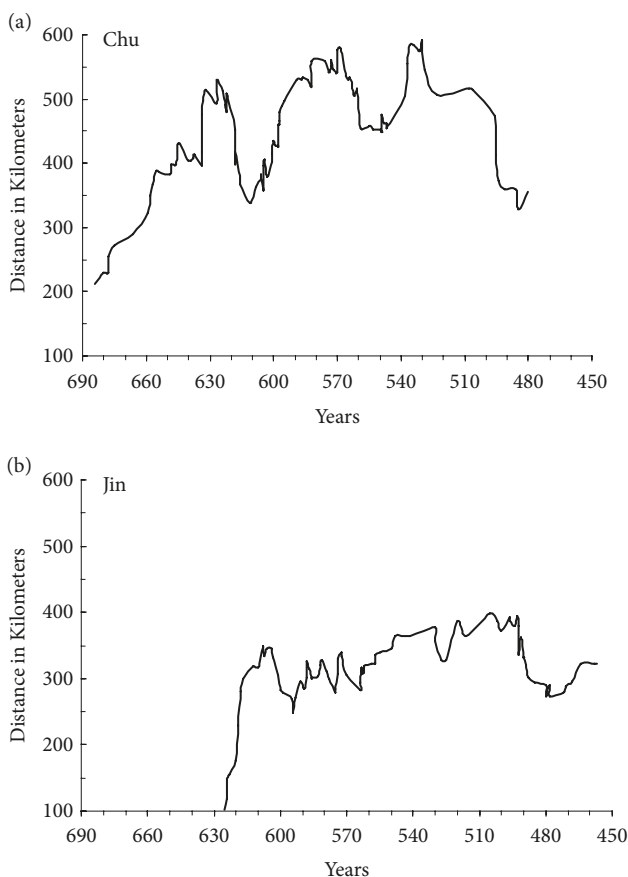


FIGURE 4.3a–d. War distances of the four most powerful states during the Spring and Autumn period. Note that all the war distances shown in the figures in this book are estimates based on a moving average of ten wars.

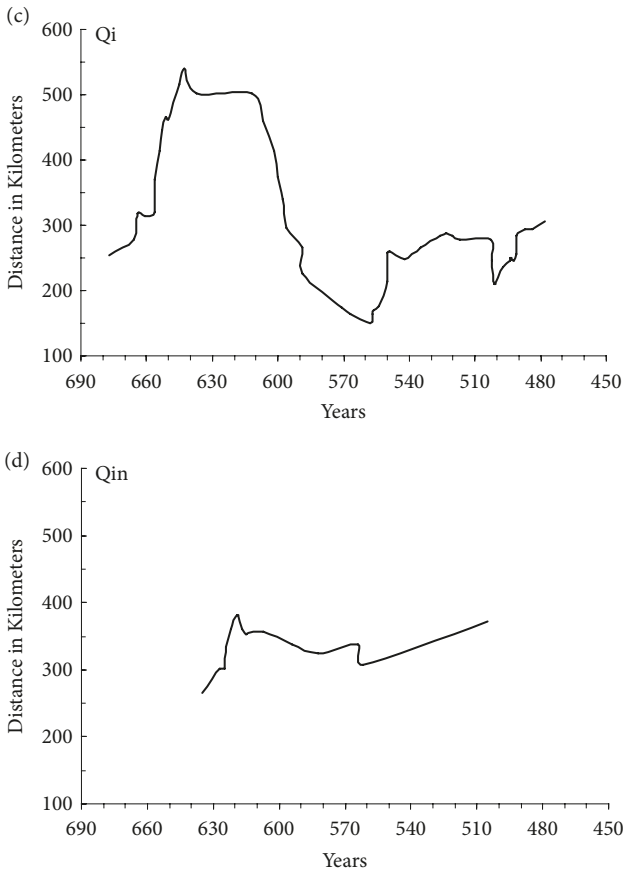


FIGURE 4.3a–d. (Continued)

In short, our results indicate that Chu was the most powerful state between 643 and 546 BCE, even though it did not have the muscle to dominate ancient China entirely.

WARFARE AND RITUAL

Eastern Zhou warfare was highly ritualized.³⁷ To demonstrate the importance of ritual in Eastern Zhou warfare, Mark Lewis has given a detailed account, which I summarize here.³⁸ Before an anticipated war, whether it was offensive or defensive, the army was called to gather at the ruler's ancestral temple, where weapons were distributed and ceremonies and sacrifices invoking the power of the

37. Kierman (1974); Lewis (1990); Rand (1979); Pankenier (1999)

38. Lewis (1990, pp. 23–27).

ancestors were performed.³⁹ En route to the battlefield, the army made sacrifices to major mountains or rivers to ward off the “evil spirits or gods of the localities upon whose domains they had trespassed.”⁴⁰ On encountering each other at the battlefield site, the two opposing armies negotiated the day and the exact place where the combat would begin. Warriors on both sides ate a ceremonial meal before the battle. During the battle, divination and battle prayer were used to invoke the presence of the ancestors and other guardian divinities of the state; oaths were sworn; and the camp was destroyed. After the battle, the winners collected the corpses of the enemy warriors to construct a tomb as a monument to bring glory to the ancestors, while the losers tried hard to retrieve the corpses of their own warriors. Back home, the triumphant army held concluding ceremonies, during which “prisoners, the heads or left ears of those slain, and any spoils taken in battle were then presented at the ancestral temples of the state and cadet lineages.”⁴¹

The highly ritualized character of the warfare led Lewis to conclude that combat at the time “was ultimately an element of cult,”⁴² that “defense of one’s honor was the primary spur to battle,”⁴³ and “definition of political authority through the service of the altars in the forms of hunting, warfare, and sacrifice underlay the social order of China in the Spring and Autumn period.”⁴⁴ This understanding of early China warfare, however, is inadequate. Although ancestral cult and honor were no doubt crucial spurs to war, they were not its major purpose. Nor was the purpose to signify and reinforce domestic authority. As with contemporary warfare, the desire for interstate dominance and a mix of economic, political, and geopolitical motives were the major causes of Eastern Zhou warfare.⁴⁵ A state that lost a war would have its homeland plundered, become subservient to the conqueror, and might even be entirely incorporated into the winning state, thus ceasing to exist.⁴⁶

Lewis’s descriptions of the rituals and ceremonies of warfare have created an impression that the rituals he describes were performed in every battle. But his

39. According to Lewis (1990, p. 23), during military mobilizations, the ruler conducted sacrifices at his ancestral temple and announced the campaign to the spirits of the ancestors. The commander of the army received his charge and a weapon at the temple. Leaders of participating sublineages performed ritual sacrifices at their own ancestral temples and “exchanged meat from these sacrifices with the ruler of the state. After the rulers had purified themselves through fasting, the weapons for the army were issued” and troops were assembled in their ranks for a special ceremony before setting off to battle.

40. Lewis (1990, p. 23).

41. Lewis (1990, p. 26).

42. Lewis (1990, p. 22).

43. Lewis (1990, p. 39).

44. By “definition of political authority” Lewis mainly refers to a warrior’s service in war as a mark of domestic authority; according to Lewis, such activities as warfare, hunting, and sacrifice allowed the participants to form “an elite which set itself apart from the general populace” (Lewis 1990, p. 28).

45. Liu (1985). See also chapter 8 for a more comprehensive analysis of the causes of military conflicts and their changes during the Eastern Zhou era.

46. Hsu (1999, p. 567).

account was a composite, constructed from a wide range of texts with different levels of credibility, mostly *Zuo's Commentary*, but also the *Rites of Zhou*, *Book of Rites*, and *Grand Historian*. From *Zuo's Commentary* alone, Lewis's accounts, which I have summarized here, are based on stories dated from 718 BCE (Yin 5) to 479 BCE (Ai 16).⁴⁷ However, his presentation implies that not much changed between 718 and 479 BCE, which is certainly not the case. For instance, the distribution of weapons to city dwellers in front of the ancestral temple was indeed a common practice before the ducal states had large standing armies (see chapter 3). By 479 BCE, however, standing armies and the complexity of military operations had long since obviated the need for such an outdated mode of military mobilization.⁴⁸

Not every early Eastern Zhou battle was preceded by a ritualized negotiation settling the day and place for the combat. In 701 BCE (Huan 11), Chu launched a surprise nighttime attack on the state of Yun. In 627 BCE (Xi 33), Jin ambushed the Qin army at Xiao Mountain.⁴⁹ On only a few occasions during the early Eastern Zhou era was the winning side recorded as building a victory monument out of the corpses of the enemy dead. Most battles were small in scale, and there would not have been enough dead warriors to build a monument. Moreover, most wars were fought between the states whose rulers regarded themselves as descendants of the Western Zhou ruling family. That being the case, such a tomb would not bring glory to the ancestors.

Lewis cites the accounts of the war between Chu and Jin in *Zuo's Commentary* (Yuan 12, 597 BCE) as an example of this tomb monument ritual. It was a major war, fought between two archrivals with no kinship ties; yet even here, *Zuo's Commentary* reports that King Zhuang of Chu rejected his minister's suggestion to build a tomb monument to mark his victory. Such a rejection certainly "acknowledges the practice" as Lewis has argued.⁵⁰ On the other hand, using a negative to illustrate a positive—that is, that such monuments were sometimes created—also indicates that the practice of this ritual was rare.

To emphasize the ritualized nature of what he refers to as "sanctioned violence" in Eastern Zhou China, Lewis stresses that Eastern Zhou warfare followed "the calendar of violence" reflecting ancient China's cosmic principles: "Official actions pertaining to violence and death, i.e., hunting, punishments, and warfare, were to be restricted to the killing time of the year, the autumn and the winter"; that is, "the ruler and the state should follow the seasons of the year, further reproduction and growth in the spring and summer, and taking life in the

47. Lewis (1990, pp. 255–56); notes 39, 45.

48. For instance, according to *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 13, 529 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1353); Jin brought 4,000 chariots of troops to an interstate meeting, which still left sufficient troops at home to defeat an invading force from the north (Yang 1990, p. 1360).

49. Both stories are in *Zuo's Commentary* (Yang 1990, pp. 130–31, 498).

50. Lewis (1990, p. 26).

Table 4.3. Numbers of wars fought by season during the Spring and Autumn period, 720–481 BCE

Periods within Spring and Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
720–643 BCE	26 (.19%)*	33 (.24)	43 (.31)	36 (.26)
642–546 BCE	48 (.18)	76 (.29)	69 (.26)	72 (.27)
545–481 BCE	35 (.26)	40 (.30)	32 (.24)	26 (.20)
Totals for entire Spring and Autumn period				
720–481 BCE	109 (.20)	149 (.28)	144 (.27)	134 (.25)

*Note: The numbers in parentheses represent the percentage of wars that broke out in that particular season relative to the total number of wars that occurred in all the seasons.

fall and winter.”⁵¹ Indeed, there are many cosmological discussions in the early China received texts, and such thinking did shape many aspects of life among the ancient Chinese.⁵² But did rulers really base their decisions about when to attack other states on these cosmic principles? Did ritual play such a decisive role in Eastern Zhou warfare that ceremonial principles rather than strategic thinking guided war-making? I shall try to answer these questions based on my war data.

I have subdivided the Spring and Autumn period into three shorter periods in order to detect any trends of change. The first period covers 720–643 BCE (the year of the death of Duke Huan of Qi). The second period covers 642–546 BCE (the year when Jin and Chu reached a truce agreement). The third period covers 545–481 BCE. Table 4.3 shows the number of wars fought in each of the three periods and the percentages of wars (in parentheses) that broke out in any particular season for a given period.⁵³

Table 4.3 shows that during the Spring and Autumn period, a total of 109 wars, or 20 percent, broke out in the spring, notably fewer than the number of wars started in any of the other three seasons. More wars broke out in the summer (a total of 149 wars, or 28 percent) than in fall or winter, although these two seasons were the time for wars and other killing activities according to Chinese cosmologies, as stressed by Lewis. Moreover, between 545 and 481 BCE, the percentage of wars started in the spring jumped from 19 percent and 18 percent in the two earlier periods to 26 percent, and more wars were fought in the spring and summer (56%) than in the fall and winter (44%). This striking change might

51. Lewis (1990, pp. 139, 65).

52. Pankenier (1995, 1999).

53. My calculation follows the Zhou calendar, which starts with spring (the first three months of the year), then summer (next three months of the year), and so on. The climate during the Eastern Zhou era was warmer than today's. Farmers along the Yellow River could harvest their winter wheat in the first month of the summer season each year.

have been the result of the increase in standing armies and the states' growing capacity to tax the population. Before the rise of standing armies, a state had to mobilize its civilian population, who otherwise would be preparing for the next planting—a mobilization understandably more difficult than mobilizing professional warriors. Moreover, spring is the time when any agricultural society faces food shortages. It was also the worst time for plundering, because the winter crops in the fields of neighboring states were still not edible. Spring was a bad time for starting a war unless a state was strong enough to provide those who joined the fight with sustainable food supplies.⁵⁴ Therefore, the fact that more wars were fought in the spring in the last period reflected the development of state capacity during the Spring and Autumn era.

In summary, it is not that rituals played no role in early Chinese warfare, but only that warfare in early China was not “ultimately an element of cult.” The ancient Chinese had many understandable reasons for following the “calendar of violence” in the hunting or slaughtering of domestic animals. War, however, is a very different kind of activity. Defeat in war entails loss: of lives, properties, land, or even an entire state. This consideration compels the warring parties to act strategically. Let us now turn to the rationalizing effect of Eastern Zhou warfare on other aspects of society.

THE RISE OF EFFICIENCY-DRIVEN CULTURE

The Western Zhou rulers developed a complicated set of rites, based on patrilineal ideals, to regulate the behavior of aristocratic lineages in almost every sphere of social life. Over the course of several hundred years those rites became a major part of political culture. During the Age of Hegemons, the conduct of the aristocrats was still heavily influenced by this legacy. In the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, for example, numerous entries praise dukes or ministers who behaved according to certain ritual codes and condemn others who violated them, underscoring the importance of the Zhou rites in society. But the need for survival, not to mention for victory in war, compelled rulers to adopt an efficiency-oriented, instrumental way of thinking and acting, which began to influence other spheres of social life.

The influence of traditional morality on warfare can be seen in the behavior of Duke Xiang of Song (r. 650–637 BCE) during a battle between Song and Chu in 638 BCE. Before the battle, when the Song army was already in combat formation

54. Summer was different because it motivated people to harvest the crops of neighboring states. The following entries in *Zuo's Commentary* show that harvesting neighboring states' crops was a major impetus to fight: In 720 BCE (Yin 3; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 27), the Zheng army harvested the crops in the state of Zhou in both summer and fall. In 602 BCE (Xuan 7; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 692), Di attacked Jin in order to harvest their millet. In 578 BCE (Cheng 13; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 863–64), the Jin minister Lü Xiang denounced Qin on a diplomatic occasion because the Qin army had invaded their cities and harvested their crops. In the summer of 478 BCE (Ai 17, reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1708), Chu troops harvested Chen's wheat.

on the north side of the Hong River, the Chu troops were halfway across the river. Ziyu (Song's chief minister and Duke Xiang's half brother) urged an attack, but Duke Xiang refused, saying: "Gentlemen do not kill the wounded and do not capture combatants with grey hairs. Not to attack enemy troops at the passes was an ancient tradition. . . . [It is, therefore, not honorable] to attack enemy troops before they have deployed their troops into battle formation." Duke Xiang allowed the Chu warriors to cross the river and assume battle formation. The ensuing battle ended in a total defeat for Song; all the duke's bodyguards were killed and Duke Xiang himself was mortally wounded.

Such ritualistic behavior was already in considerable decline at the time of this battle. *Zuo's Commentary* records Ziyu's rebuttal to Duke Xiang's argument:

If a wounded enemy combatant is still alive, why can we not kill him? If one has sympathy for a wounded enemy combatant, one should not have injured him in the first place; if one has compassion for combatants with grey hairs, it is better to surrender than to fight. An army ought to engage in a battle under favorable conditions. . . . There is nothing wrong in ambushing enemies at the passes. . . . There is also nothing wrong with attacking enemies before they can assemble in good fighting formation.

Clearly, instrumental rationality (or an efficiency-oriented mentality) informed Ziyu's understanding of warfare. In the very early stages of the Eastern Zhou era, ritualistic formality still strongly affected the conduct of warfare, but the importance of ritualistic formality quickly declined as military competition increased.

In the Age of Hegemons, major states such as Jin, Chu, Qi, Qin, and Wu, pioneered an efficiency-based "the ends justify the means" war strategy. Examples abound. In a 627 BCE battle between Chu and Jin, the armies of the two states were stationed on the opposite sides of the Zhi River. Neither wanted to risk crossing the river with the other waiting in fighting formation on solid ground. Perhaps as a trick, the Chu army withdrew a certain distance, ostensibly to allow the Jin army to cross and regroup, but the Jin commander(s) decided not to take the risk—or the bait. In a battle between Jin and Qin in the same year (i.e., the famous ambush at Xiao Mountain mentioned earlier), the Jin army surprised the Qin army at a mountain pass, destroyed their chariots, and killed almost all Qin's troops.⁵⁵ In 560 BCE, in a war between Wu and Chu, the Chu general Yangyouji positioned troops at three different ambush sites, and then attacked with the rest of his army. After the fighting, the Chu army pretended defeat and retreated, luring the pursuing Wu troops into the three-pronged ambush.

55. Ambushes and surprise attacks were apparently common strategies at the time. For instance, Zheng troops ambushed the enemy in 588 BCE (Cheng 3) and delivered a surprise night attack against the enemy in 575 BCE (Cheng 16; *Zuo's Commentary*; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 812, 879).

The Wu army lost badly, and Prince Dang was captured.⁵⁶ In 559 BCE, Jin led an allied force of thirteen states to attack Qin. Upstream from where Jin's force had to cross the Jing River, Qin poisoned the river, killing many warriors of the allied force and compelling a withdrawal.⁵⁷ This is perhaps the first recorded instance of "chemical warfare" in Chinese history. In a war between Jin and Qi in 555 BCE, the Jin generals ordered the advance line to fan out and to raise many flags. They also ordered that straw men be placed in all the chariots, on the right side; that tree branches be tied behind the chariots; and that the chariots be driven into the field to raise clouds of dust. Jin's apparently overwhelming number of troops threw the Qi warriors into retreat before the fighting had even begun.⁵⁸ Readers may notice that, as time went on, acts of deception became increasingly common, and strategies increasingly sophisticated. This culminated in the use of professional generals and military strategists during the later Eastern Zhou period.

The advantages the major states thus achieved forced the smaller states to follow suit. The story that follows, focused on Zheng, shows how rivalries between the hegemons fostered the rise of instrumental thinking in a second-rank state. As mentioned earlier, Zheng had long been a focal point in the conflict between Jin and Chu and was forced to shift its allegiance between the two hegemons many times. Once Zheng allied itself with one, the other would invade to compel Zheng to switch its allegiance. As this back and forth continued, the Zheng aristocrats' thinking became increasingly pragmatic. In 598 BCE, Chu invaded Zheng, which was then an ally of Jin. But before the Chu army reached Xinzheng, the Zheng capital, the Zheng rulers had already decided to switch back to Chu. Prince Ziliang, a Zheng minister, justified the decision thusly: "Jin and Chu have based their power not on moral superiority but on sheer military might. Therefore, we should ally with whichever state has come to attack us. Why should we act honorably since neither Jin nor Chu has a sense of honor?" In 564 BCE, a similar incident occurred when Jin, together with eleven other states, invaded Zheng and forced it to sign a covenant. A Jin minister demanded that the following statement be added to the covenant: "If Zheng does not obey Jin or has no sincerity about today's covenant, they will be punished as stated in the covenant." Prince Fei of Zheng immediately stepped forward and insisted on adding the following clause to the covenant as well:

Zheng is very unfortunately located between two mighty states. The two states not only do not treat us with friendliness but also always force us into alliance with them. . . . After today's covenant, if Zheng does not

56. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 13; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1002).

57. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 14; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1009).

58. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 18; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1038).

completely follow a state that treats us well and meanwhile is strong enough to protect us, Zheng will receive the punishment as stated in the covenant.

Not surprisingly, immediately after the Jin-Zheng covenant, Chu invaded Zheng, and Zheng shifted its allegiance back to Chu. During the deliberation to reach a decision, two Zheng ministers expressed uneasiness about the constant switching of allegiance, but their arguments were categorically rejected by two more influential ministers, who argued: "When we made a covenant with Jin, it was stated that we would follow whoever is stronger. Now Chu is attacking us but Jin's army has not come to our rescue. This means that Chu is stronger. We have not really violated what we promised in the covenant."

The military pressure from the two hegemonies facilitated the development of a pragmatic mentality among Zheng politicians. It is perhaps no wonder that in 536 BCE, Zheng became the first state to publish its legal codes on a tripod cauldron and to conduct a series of political reforms that few states at the time could match. It is also not a surprise that a colorful and pragmatic politician like Zichan, whose many actions predated the later Legalist reforms (see chapter 5), emerged in Zheng and not in other states. Zheng's political culture became increasingly pragmatic precisely because of the constant military pressure they faced as the result of their unfortunate geopolitical location.

EMERGENCE OF THE COUNTY SYSTEM

In the Age of Hegemons, the states that expanded their territories found that they needed to manage them as well. Two different responses had developed simultaneously. The first was bureaucratization: newly acquired territory was parceled out to be governed by appointed officials. The second was secondary feudalization, meaning that the dukes granted part of their dukedoms to lineage members or to able ministers as fiefs. These two new developments were to have an enormous impact on later politics.

The county system was not created *ex nihilo*. As discussed in chapter 2, the mid-Western Zhou government had already developed a rudimentary bureaucracy, which was, however, limited to the royal domain. All city-states at the time were ruled by aristocrats. They were also very small and governed informally. By about the seventh century BCE, however, the rulers of the city-states that had gained the upper hand in the wars started to appoint officials to manage their newly acquired territories, thus initiating a wave of widespread bureaucratization. This wave, which had clearly inherited elements of the mid-Western Zhou rudimentary bureaucratization, took place in many parts of ancient China, and was the direct forerunner of another more systematic bureaucratization wave during the Age of Total War.

The most notable development during this wave of bureaucratization was the creation of the county (*xian*) as an administrative and military unit.⁵⁹ And, since the county system resulted from successful military expansion,⁶⁰ it is not surprising that the hegemonic states were the first to adopt it.⁶¹ The word “county” is first mentioned in *Zuo’s Commentary* in an entry in 676 BCE (Zhuang 18), when King Wu of Chu (r. 740–690 BCE), after conquering Quan, turned the new territories into a county and appointed Dou Min to administer it. It is almost certain that this first mention postdated Chu’s adoption of the county system. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Ai 17, 478 BCE) contains a conversation that supposedly took place among King Hui of Chu (r. 488–481 BCE), Zigu, and Lord Ye. When King Hui consulted them on the appointment of a general to lead an army to attack Chen, Zigu recommended two generals, but Lord Ye rejected them on the grounds that neither of them had a good reputation. Zigu replied: “Peng Zhongshuang was once a captive of Shen, but King Wen appointed him chief minister. Peng went on to conquer Shen and Xi and turned both states into our counties.” Since it is recorded in the received texts that Chu conquered Shen in 688 BCE and Xi in 683 BCE, Chu must have had a county system by then. Moreover, the record also indicates that by the early seventh century BCE, Chu was appointing officials based on meritocratic criteria.

The earliest records of Jin’s county system appear in *Zuo’s Commentary* in 635 BCE, and again in 627 BCE.⁶² By the mid-sixth century BCE, most of Jin’s territory was managed under the county system. According to historical records, Jin adopted the county system later than Chu did; this is perhaps because while Chu was single-mindedly expanding its territory northward, Jin was still in the throes of palace intrigues and succession crises.⁶³ Perhaps, too, because the Chu rulers, who proclaimed themselves kings and aspired to equal status with the Zhou

59. Historians tend to link the county system with the commandery (*jun*) system and call it the commandery-county system. When commanderies first appeared as administrative units, they were mostly located in remote areas with very low population density. Therefore, although a commandery was much larger than a county in size, it occupied a lower position in the administrative hierarchy. Later, with increases in population, counties were established within a commandery as another level of the administrative unit. Gradually, the commandery became the higher administrative level, leading to the formation of the commandery-county system.

60. Even the word “county” had Western Zhou origins. The Chinese character *xian* originally meant “to suspend.” As part of the mid-Western Zhou bureaucratization process, Zhou rulers started to appoint officials to manage designated areas that were administratively “attached” to the central government (Li 1998, p. 25). Metaphorically, these administrative units were “hanging from” the central government, held by the administrative strings, hence the meaning of *xian*, that is, “an administrative county under direct control of the central government” (Creel 1964, p. 171).

61. Numerous scholars have written about the emergence and nature of the county system in this period (Creel 1964; Du 1979, pp. 143–46; 1990, pp. 119–23; Han 1986; Qian 2004, pp. 15–16).

62. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Xi 25, 635 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 436) records that Duke Wen of Jin appointed Zhao Cui as the county minister of Yuan and Hu Zhen as the county minister of Wen. Elsewhere, *Zuo’s Commentary* (Xi 33, 627 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 503) relates that Xu Chen was awarded a county that had once belonged to Xian Mao.

63. Not until Duke Wen (r. 636–628 BCE) was Jin politics stabilized (Li and Li 1999, see chapter 5).

rulers, were more interested in creating a government apparatus that mirrored the Western Zhou bureaucracy.

Qin and Qi may have adopted the county system around the same time. For example, in *Grand Historian* (History of Qin) there is a very brief account of Qin establishing counties in 688 BCE and 687 BCE, after it had annexed several small states. We know nothing else about the Qin county system except for this very brief entry in *Grand Historian*, but from the fact that even when Lord Shang started his reforms in 356 and 350 BCE, the Qin central governing structure was still very simple, we can infer that the Qin county system could not have been very sophisticated during the seventh century BCE.

There are reasons to believe that Qi adopted a quite different county system. The inscriptions on an excavated bronze bell (the Shuyi Bell) record that Duke Ling of Qi (r. 581–554 BCE) bestowed 300 counties on Shuyi, a Qi minister, after Qi's conquest of Lai. This suggests that the counties in Qi were very small. Had they been bigger, Duke Ling would not have been able to award all 300 to one man. Possibly, a Qi county at the time was just one unit of a fief.

Even in Chu and Jin, the two states whose county systems were the most developed (and so we know much more about them), there were differences as well as similarities between their county systems.⁶⁴ They were similar in the sense that the counties in both states were military and administrative units and the head of the county was also the ranking local military commander. This military aspect was often a problem for the states, especially for Chu, because the counties were bigger and controlled more troops. In this period, conflicts between the king and the chief ministers of counties could lead to major episodes of regime instability in Chu.⁶⁵ It was partly to avoid this kind of political instability that governments in the Age of Total War turned the county into a purely administrative unit.

The county systems of Chu and Jin also had several differences. Generally speaking, the Chu county system quickly developed into a bureaucratic structure run by appointed officials,⁶⁶ whereas in Jin the bureaucratization process was slow. Also, the Chu king was able to appoint county chief ministers, which gave the king the power to control county-level officials. But in Jin, many counties became their ministers' private property over time.⁶⁷ The differences show clearly

64. I stress the variations among the county systems adopted by different states because the state that adopted a more bureaucratic governing structure in the end enjoyed greater political stability and was often more successful in war. The outcomes of interstate wars and the stability in domestic politics contributed to the spread of bureaucratic government.

65. For example, King Ling of Chu (r. 540–529 BCE) was overthrown by Prince Qiji, the county chief minister of Cai in 529 BCE (*Zuo's Commentary*, Zhao 13; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1346–48).

66. Gu and Zhu (2001, p. 284).

67. For example, Zhao Tong inherited Yuan county from his father, Zhao Cui (Han 1986, p. 70). Wuchen (an aristocrat who defected from Chu to Jin) was appointed chief minister of Xing, and Xing later became the private property of Wuchen's lineage (Li and Li 1999, p. 272).

that Chu's bureaucracy was more developed than that of the other major city-states in this period.

Although we still lack deep knowledge of Chu's administrative system, some of the existing evidence does give us a sense of Chu's degree of bureaucratization. For example, we know that to a certain degree the number of official titles existing in a state indicates the level of bureaucratic sophistication. The Ming dynasty scholar Dong Yue, using surviving records of the time, counted a total of ninety-one different titles for Chu officials.⁶⁸ Based on Dong Yue's sources, I calculated that at least sixty-four of these official titles had existed during the Spring and Autumn period. On the other hand, Dong was able to find only seventy-two official titles for Qin, and most of these were created after Qin's draconian Legalist reforms in 356 and 350 BCE. The rest of the states listed in Dong's work have far fewer official titles than Qin and Chu.

The sophistication of the Chu bureaucracy can also be seen from another angle. An entry in *Zuo's Commentary* (Xuan 11, 598 BCE) records how Chu's chief minister, Sun Shu'ao, supervised the construction of the city walls for Xi, a city about 320 kilometers from the Chu capital. Sun ordered a border officer to draft a plan, which the officer in turn submitted to the minister of public works. The plan included such details as the projected sites of city walls, the amount of labor required and the amount of food needed for the people who worked on the project, the time needed to complete it, the amount of earth and other building materials needed; the allocation of tools, building materials, and manpower for different tasks; the sources of water and earth for each section of the city wall; and the supervisors assigned to oversee different tasks. The entry also mentions that the project was planned to be completed in thirty days and that it was finished on time.

The record reveals a high-functioning bureaucracy. The complexity of the plan and the efficiency of its execution also imply a good deal of sophistication on the part of Chu's lower-ranking officials. Based on this narrative and a few other sources, let us evaluate the functions of the Chu officials by the four Weberian criteria of bureaucracy mentioned in chapter 2: (1) hierarchical structure, (2) operation following rules and procedures rather than the orders of a person, (3) selection and promotion of officials based on performance, and (4) salary as a form of compensation.

First and most obvious, the Chu bureaucracy was hierarchically structured (Weber's first criterion). The Chu king was at the top. Under the king were the chief minister (Sun Shu'ao), the minister of public works, and the border officer. They were all high-ranking officials. But many lower-ranking officers must also have been needed for the project. Second, they apparently acted in accordance with clear rules and a protocol. As chief minister, Sun Shu'ao did not supervise the

68. Dong (1998). Readers need to be reminded that the number of officials known may reflect the extant sources rather than realities on the ground.

building of the city walls himself. Instead, he ordered the border officer to draft a plan. However, it seems that Sun Shu'ao did not have the authority to approve the plan, for it had to be handed to the minister of public works. Third, even though this account does not tell us how these officials were selected, we know that Sun Shu'ao did not inherit the chief ministerial position from his father, nor was he able to pass the position on to his own son.⁶⁹ In fact, as the earlier example of Peng Zhongshuang's appointment as chief minister shows, Chu's high officials had been appointed based on merit since at least the beginning of the seventh century BCE. Moreover, it has been argued that by the early sixth century BCE, merit appointments and promotions had increased in Chu.⁷⁰ Therefore, the elements of the Chu bureaucracy also met the third Weberian criterion. Fourth, we know very little about how Chu officials were compensated at this stage. But, in a group of Chu tombs recently unearthed at Xiasi in Xichuan County of Henan province, archaeologists have identified the principal occupant of the most lavish tomb as Yuan Zifeng, a Chu chief minister who died in 548 BCE.⁷¹ Yuan Zifeng was the only member of his lineage to serve as chief minister, which means that he earned rather than inherited the position. Moreover, archaeologists found many bronze vessels and bells in Yuan Zifeng's tomb that came from the estate of a previous chief minister, whose family had fallen from grace as a result of factional strife.⁷² It can be inferred that Yuan had received these objects (and presumably many others as well as property) from the king as a form of compensation. Like the mid-Western Zhou bureaucracy, many elements of the Chu administration brought it close to the Weberian definition of bureaucracy.⁷³

In this period, even though major states like Chu and Jin had implemented bureaucratic forms of government following military expansion, the extent of bureaucratization was still limited in comparison with the later wave during the Age of Total War. Counties during the Age of Hegemons were all military as well as administrative units, and top county officials enjoyed great autonomy in local governance. The counties established during the Age of Total War, however, were purely administrative units, and they enjoyed much less autonomy. Moreover, although the county heads as well as the other officials were increasingly selected based on merit (particularly in Chu) during the Age of Hegemons, only members

69. Y. Li (2002, pp. 150–52) recounts how Sun Shu'ao rose from the bottom of the hierarchy to chief minister based on his ability.

70. Gu and Zhu (2001, p. 284); Y. Li (1999, chap. 6).

71. Y. Li (2004). For Yuan Zifeng's death, see *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 25, 548 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1103).

72. Falkenhausen (2006, p. 347).

73. Chu has been described as more aristocratically conservative than other states (e.g., Cook and Major 1999). My analysis of Chu's institutional development between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE does not contradict this. As I assert in chapter 8, it was exactly because of Chu's rather successful early bureaucratization that it escaped the feudal crisis and a more thorough collapse of the aristocratic order, as took place in Jin and Qi. Yet this early advantage of Chu's also contributed to its conservatism and military weakness during the Age of Total War.

of the aristocratic lineages were qualified candidates. Not until the bureaucratic reforms during the Age of Total War were official positions potentially open to all males in society. During the Age of Hegemons, the dominating trend in government, especially in the north of ancient China, was not bureaucratization but secondary feudalization.

SECONDARY FEUDALIZATION

With some notable exceptions,⁷⁴ most Chinese historians believe that there was a three-layer feudal structure (king-dukes, duke-ministers, minister-retainers) during the Western Zhou period. In reality, however, most Western Zhou city-states were too small for the kings or dukes to parcel out fiefs to their subordinates (see chapter 3). It is more likely that secondary (and tertiary) feudalization only took place during the Eastern Zhou period, after the city-states' territorial expansion. Not all of the Eastern Zhou city-states, though, handled their territorial winnings by embracing full-fledged feudalization. Chu, for example, appointed officials to manage its new territories. But Jin and the major states of central-eastern China, including Qi, Lu, Song, Zheng, and Wey, employed secondary and even tertiary feudalization. Tertiary feudalization had less impact on the Eastern Zhou history than secondary feudalization, so our focus will be on the process and impact of secondary feudalization.⁷⁵

The high tide of secondary feudalization came in the latter half of the seventh century BCE, about the same time as that of the county system. This is not surprising to us because it occurred when many militarily successful states had greatly expanded their territories, which then required managing. To enfeoff able ministers was certainly a traditional option. The major tide of secondary feudalization ended after the seventh century BCE, because those enfeoffed ministers' lineages had grown to the point where they filled the state-level political niches. Tertiary feudalization occurred mostly during the sixth century BCE, after the lineages of the enfeoffed ministers' had acquired enough land to parcel some of it out to their retainers.

In the seventh century, there were two categories of beneficiaries of secondary feudalization. The first comprised members of the ducal lineage. This is exemplified in Lu, where the fruits of territorial expansion were shared by the three younger sons (Qingfu, Shuya, and Jiyou) of Duke Huan of Lu (r. 711–694 BCE). *Zuo's Commentary* provides accounts of what followed the old duke's death: Duke Huan was peacefully succeeded by Duke Zhuang, his eldest son. But upon the

74. Hsu (1999); Lü (1998).

75. In some states in the sixth century BCE, the ministers further parceled out their land to their retainers as fiefs (known as tertiary feudalization). This action increased the power of the retainers, enabling some of them to challenge their aristocratic masters.

death of Duke Zhuang in 662 BCE, Duke Huan's three younger sons engaged in a bloody succession struggle, during which two of Duke Zhuang's sons, Duke Ziban and Duke Min, and two of his three younger brothers (Qingfu and Shuya) were killed.⁷⁶ In 659 BCE, Jiyou, the youngest of the three brothers, installed Duke Zhuang's surviving third son, Duke Xi (r. 659–627 BCE), on the throne, and Lu again entered a period of political stability. In return, Duke Xi granted Jiyou the territory of Bi and another territory north of Wen River. Perhaps as a gesture of reconciliation, Jiyou suggested that Duke Xi also grant fiefs to the lineages of his dead brothers Qingfu and Shuya. This was the origin of the three most important lineages (known as the Three Huans) in the state of Lu.⁷⁷

In the second category were the duke's able generals, to whom he would grant newly acquired territories. This was the pattern in Jin (and to a certain extent in Qi). In Jin, for instance, Duke Xian bestowed Geng and Wei on his generals Zhao Shuo and Bi Wan for their role in the conquest of two territories in 661 BCE.⁷⁸ When Duke Wen came to power, he made handsome awards of land and titles to several ministers who had remained with him during his nineteen-year exile.⁷⁹ Although secondary feudalization in Jin bore the strong imprint of the Western Zhou feudal arrangement, the Western Zhou rulers had mainly granted titles and land to members of their own lineages (see chapter 2); the Jin rulers also granted titles and land, but largely to non-kin generals who had demonstrated their abilities in war and in administration. Some Chinese historians, therefore, see the merit-based secondary feudalization in Jin as a major reform.⁸⁰

During the Age of Hegemons, although bureaucratization and feudalization were parallel processes, the latter was certainly dominant in shaping the historical dynamism. Regardless of the differences in the nature of secondary feudalization, all the states that practiced ultimately encountered the same problem, as noted earlier: aristocratic ministers and their lineages accumulated power at the expense of the dukes. That change in the power structure generated conflicts between the dukes and the aristocratic ministers (often ending in the latter's favor) and also among the ministers themselves. As the conflicts heightened, they threatened the entire feudal political framework, including the hegemonic interstate system.

76. Ziban, Duke Min, and Duke Xi are the three sons of Duke Zhang.

77. Zheng and Song also followed this path of secondary feudalization. In Zheng, the seven sublineages descended from Duke Mu (r. 627–606 BCE) gradually dominated Zheng politics. Song politics were dominated by the descendants of Duke Dai (r. 799–766 BCE). See Gu and Zhu (2001, pp. 364–67, 368–69) for how these two dukes' descendants rose to power.

78. They both had played crucial roles in the conquest (*Zuo's Commentary*, Min 1; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 258).

79. Zou (1986).

80. Li and Li (1999, pp. 80–90).

THE GENERAL PATTERN OF EASTERN ZHOU WARFARE

This section presents my interpretation of the dynamics of war distances (figure 4.4 a and b) and how it related to Eastern Zhou historical development. Since most of my analyses were either discussed earlier in this chapter or will be discussed more fully in the next four chapters, I will not substantiate the interpretation with systematically presented historical evidence. The figures show that the war distances in the early Eastern Zhou period were quite short. Most states' armies were not strong enough to sustain long-distance war, and each state was still engaged with its neighbors in one of the regional war theaters shown in table 4.1.

Let's look at figure 4.4a first. War distances increased steadily and quickly, from less than 100 kilometers in the late eighth century BCE to around 400 kilometers in about 650 BCE. Two related changes were behind this: the merging of the four theaters of war and the clash of the four most powerful states in the now unified war theater. Between about 650 BCE and the mid-sixth century BCE (shortly after the 546 truce agreement), the war distances fluctuated between 200 and 400 kilometers. In this period war distances rose when two or more large states clashed head-on. Mostly, however, the large states tended to avoid direct confrontations and to achieve dominance by forcing smaller states into submission, which generally reduced the war distances.

In the latter half of the sixth century BCE, the war distances greatly declined. When the wars fought between Wu and Chu are excluded from the data (see figure 4.4b), the decline is more pronounced. Figure 4.4b shows that the war distance reached 380 kilometers in 532 BCE and then declined. Except for a few bumps upward in the middle of the fifth century BCE, the war distance remained low until 354 BCE.⁸¹ Roughly between 546 BCE and the elimination of Wu by Yue in 473 BCE, Wu was an important player and archenemy of Chu. Wars fought between Wu and Chu tended to cover such extraordinarily long distances that they fell outside of the general pattern, because Wu was located at the lower reach of the Yangzi and Huai rivers, Chu at the Yangzi River's middle reach. The land between the two is flat, with only small changes in altitude, making water transportation a more efficient way for both states to move troops and supplies over long distances. Therefore, both states were naval powers as well as being capable of long-distance land warfare.

Two different historical forces were behind the generally low war distances between 532 and 354 BCE. Early in this period, roughly between 532 and 419 BCE, the low war distances were caused by the collapse of the hegemonic interstate system. As will be discussed in the following chapter, after the 546 truce agreement Jin was increasingly torn by domestic strife and no longer able to sustain its hegemonic status in the north. This created opportunities for

81. The war distance was 211 km in 354 BCE.

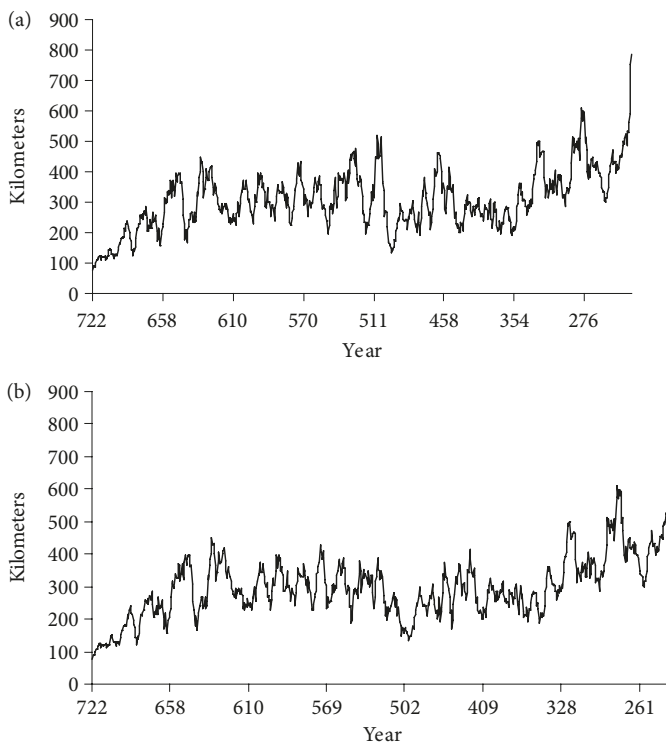


FIGURE 4.4. War distances in kilometers between 722 and 221 BCE. Figure 4.4a includes the wars between Chu and Wu while Figure 4.4b excludes wars between the two states.

smaller states to settle scores against each other and for a big state like Qi to rekindle its ambitions, facilitating a significant increase in short-distance wars in the north. After 419 BCE, however, all the major states developed into territorial states. Thereafter, few states were able to directly attack the capital of another state; they had to first defeat the enemy at its border.⁸² This transformation in the nature of the states and warfare contributed to the continued short war distances after 419 BCE.

After 354 BCE the war distances markedly increased. The war-distance dynamism hereafter essentially reflects Qin's military expansion, which ends with its conquest of China in 221 BCE. Figure 4.4a and b illustrates the three

82. For example, the battlefield for wars between Wei and Qin immediately after 419 BCE was mainly an area between the Luo River and Yellow River in present-day Shaanxi province; the contemporary wars between the Three Jins (Wei, Han Zhao) and Qi at the time mostly took place between the Yellow River and Ji River in present-day south Hebei and northeast Shandong provinces.

waves of Qin's military expansion leading to its final success. In the first wave, war distance peaked in 317 BCE (500 kilometers) and dropped in 293 BCE (285 kilometers). This stage marked the collapse of Wei's hegemonic position and the rise of Qin. Between 340 and 299 BCE, except for a major war that Qi, Wei, and Han initiated against Chu, the rest of the major military campaigns were all waged by Qin against the other major states. Qin repeatedly attacked Wei and Han, killed a great number of their warriors, occupied a large portion of their territories, and coerced the two states into submission. In 316 BCE, Qin also conquered Ba and Shu, located in present-day Sichuan. After that, the reach of Qin's military power placed it in direct confrontation with Chu, Zhao, and even Qi, the three more remotely located states. Qin's great military success invited concerted retaliation. In 298 BCE, Qi, Wei, Han, Song, and Zhongshan jointly attacked Qin and sacked Qin's Hangu Pass.

Qin's military licked its wounds for a few years but soon regained its strength, which initiated the second wave of expansion. The long-distance wars during this stage included Qin's attack on Qi in 285 and 270 BCE; on Chu in 280, 279, and 277 BCE; and on Wei and Zhao between 275 and 273 BCE. These wars, along with the war that Yan waged against Qi in 284 BCE, contributed to the second surge of war distance, which reached a high point in 280 BCE. Qin's military success climaxed during the War of Changping between 261 and 260 BCE, during which Zhao lost a large number of troops. But although Qin won the war, the prolonged campaign left it seriously weakened. Moreover, Qin's great military success provoked the last effective resistance efforts by the other states. In 257 and 247 BCE, Qin was twice defeated by allied forces, and associated with Qin's temporary setback was a decline of the war distance to 299 kilometers in 257 BCE. Yet only a few years later, Qin began its third wave of military expansion. No one state, or even all of them combined, was able to check Qin's military expansion this time. It is reflected in Figure 4.4 that war distance after 257 BCE increased steadily right up to Qin's conquest of ancient China in 221 BCE.

SUMMARY

After the collapse of the Western Zhou political order, the city-states formerly under the control of the Zhou court entered a new phase in their relationships. These states sometimes fought against each other one to one, and at other times aligned into opposing blocs. Large states emerged, state capacity was enhanced, standing armies appeared, and new institutions developed. These developments coincided with the formation of a new hegemonic political order and the emergence of a kind of instrumental rationality aimed, not at the pursuit of private gain, but at the gain of an entire lineage or a state—that is, the publicly oriented instrumental rationality (see chapter 1).

This chapter has three major focuses. First, it examines the emergence and nature of a hegemonic system of interstate relations. Second, it analyzes two important institutional innovations in these militarily more successful city-states—bureaucratized counties and secondary feudalization. Third, it discusses the impetus to rationalize warfare during the Age of Hegemons, the military advantages that rationalization (i.e., instrumental strategies) afforded, and how this fostered an efficiency-motivated culture and accelerated history's cumulative developmental process.

The chapter has also clarified two important subjects on which historians have provided confusing accounts. First, in analyzing the patterns of war networks, we realize that early Eastern Zhou China was not sequentially dominated by five hegemons, as many historians believe. Between 770 and 643 BCE, China had four rather separate theaters of war, each dominated by a state that benefited from its instrumental military reforms and its more protected location. Between 643 and 546 BCE, ancient Chinese interstate politics shifted to a balance of power between Jin and Chu, with Chu having the upper hand most of the time. Second, based on the seasonal aspects of warfare, among other evidence, we realize that although rituals figured significantly in early Eastern Zhou warfare, they did not determine some of the crucial facets of war conduct, because the outcomes of a war could not only alter a state's military strength but also determine its fate. The constant possibility of a life-or-death outcome swiftly advanced efficiency-oriented war strategies at the expense of Western Zhou ritualized war conduct.

The chapter's final section analyzes the general patterns of Eastern Zhou warfare as revealed by the war distance data. That data shows that changes over time in the patterns of armies' travel distances closely reflected the dynamics of Eastern Zhou politics, the states' relative military strengths and capacities to exact resources from the populace, and the changing natures and structures of the states.

The Age of Transition (545–420 BCE)

The Age of Transition was simultaneously a period of decay and a period of renewal for the early Chinese states. It started with the acceleration of a feudal crisis brought about by secondary feudalization, a process that in most states had eventuated in the seizure of ducal power by the aristocratic ministers and in Jin, to its eventual partition by three aristocratic ministers. In the wake of the decaying feudal order, more fully bureaucratized states emerged. Soon, these new states were using their power to do more government remodeling and to wage more effective wars, paving the way for the eventual unification of China. To understand this part of China's history, it is therefore necessary that we start with the feudal crisis.

THE FEUDAL CRISIS

During the sixth century BCE, about fifty years after the wave of secondary feudalization reached its end, the aristocratic ministers in Jin, Qi, and several other major states who had received parcels of land during that time built their own armies and became increasingly powerful. Their power undermined the ducal power in these states; it also generated conflict between the dukes and their ministers and among the ministers themselves; the dukes were often caught between feuding ministers. These conflicts, which multiplied and intensified following the 546 BCE truce agreement, led to the eventual collapse of a feudal arrangement that had formed during the early Western Zhou period and expanded during the Age of Hegemons (chapters 3 and 4). I refer to this entire process as the *feudal crisis*.

The feudal crisis developed in various states at a similar pace.¹ In Jin, for instance, after Duke Ling's (r. 620–607 BCE) assassination by Zhao Chuan (the duke's chief minister), the struggle between the ducal house and successive aristocratic ministers, and among the ministers themselves, never truly stopped.

1. The states at the time held frequent interstate meetings for a variety of purposes. As Walker (1971, p. 62) calculates, in the beginning of the Spring and Autumn period, 90 percent of the interstate meeting participants were dukes, but by the end of the sixth century BCE, ducal attendance had dropped below 20 percent. In the same period, the ministers' attendance at interstate meetings increased from zero to over 65 percent. The prevalence of the aristocratic ministers in interstate meetings is another indication of the decline of ducal power during the feudal crisis.

By the time Duke Ping (r. 557–532 BCE) was enthroned, Jin politics was dominated by six aristocratic ministers.² At the time of Duke Wen, three Huan lineages dominated Lu politics, and in 562 BCE the three Huan lineages divided Lu's standing army into three smaller armies, each controlling one,³ leaving the ducal house in Lu without an army under its direct control.⁴ In Qi, after the death of Duke Hui (r. 608–599 BCE), politics also came to be increasingly dominated by the ministerial lineages. By the mid-sixth century BCE, the aristocratic lineages had grown so strong that, of the five dukes who ruled in Qi between 553 and 481 BCE, four were assassinated by their ministers.⁵

To give readers a better sense of the historical process behind the collapse of the feudal order, let me briefly indicate the differences between ancient China and medieval Europe by highlighting the major actors involved and the different reasons behind the collapse of the European and Chinese feudal orders. Medieval Europe had four major types of competing actors with overlapping rights and jurisdictions: the state, the warrior aristocracy, the church,⁶ and the urban bourgeoisie.⁷ The European feudal system was undermined by a combination of several forces: infantry warfare that rendered knightly cavalry warfare outmoded,⁸ the state's enhanced capacity to generate its own revenues and manpower to fight new kinds of wars during and after the fifteenth century,⁹ and the rise of independent and semi-independent commercial cities.¹⁰ In short, the European feudal order declined because the power of the aristocracies waned in comparison with that of the other actors, especially the state and city bourgeoisie.

Ancient China's feudal system operated in a much simpler society. No powerful ecclesiastical orders existed to mediate or regulate the conflict between the

2. They are the heads of the following six lineages: Zhao, Wei, Han, Fan, Zhongxing, and Zhi.

3. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 11; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 986–87).

4. What happened in Lu was not unique. In states such as Jin, Qi, Zheng, and Song, each of the lineages had its own army, and these private armies would be integrated for fighting during a major interstate war. In Jin, a minister's private army could be so large that Xi Ke, a Jin minister, even intended to bring his private army to attack the whole state of Qi for some alleged insult while on a diplomatic trip to Qi (*Zuo's Commentary*, Xuan 17, 592 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 771–72).

5. The following are the recorded reasons for the four dukes' deaths: (1) Duke Zhuang (r. 553–548 BCE) was assassinated by Cui Zhu for committing adultery with Cui's wife; (2) Duke Yanruzi (r. 489 BCE) was enthroned with the support of the Guo and Gao lineages, but once the Guo and Gao lineages had been eliminated by the Tian and Bao lineages in a civil war, Duke Yanruzi was assassinated and replaced by Duke Dao (r. 488–485 BCE), who was backed by the Tian lineage but hated by the Bao lineage; (3) Duke Dao was assassinated by the Bao lineage three years into his reign; (4) Duke Jian (r. 484–481 BCE) was assassinated by Tian Chengzi (head of the Tian lineage) because he trusted a person whom Tian disliked.

6. Backman (2003); Bloch (1961); Speed (1996).

7. Neither the church nor the bourgeoisie were part of the feudal order. The priest had been a powerful actor before the rise of feudal Europe, and the bourgeoisie gradually gained importance during and after the High Middle Ages. See Finer (1997, vol. 2, chap. 5) for a masterful description of the four major actors of Medieval Europe. See also Nicholas (1992, pp. 297–314) for the rising importance of cities and the state in the High Middle Ages.

8. Howard (1976); Finer (1975).

9. The standing army and regular taxation were established in France and England during the Hundred Years War (1337–1453); (Ertman 1997; Given-Wilson 1986; Henneman 1971; Kaeuper 1988).

10. Brooke (2000, pp. 155–73); Moraw (1989); Parker (2004); Tilly and Blockmans (1994).

duke (or king) and his vassals or among the aristocrats.¹¹ No powerful and largely autonomous commercial city arose amid the feudal order. Nor was the collapse of Zhou feudalism related to the changing nature of warfare, even though some historians have argued along this line.¹² Unlike those of the European knights, the privileges of the aristocratic ministers during Eastern Zhou did not derive from their warrior status alone, nor were their privileges bound to a particular form of warfare. Ancient China's feudal system comprised only two actors: the dukes and the aristocracy. In sharp contrast to the European situation, during China's feudal crisis, the power of the aristocracy did not decline but rose. And it was the rise of the aristocracy during the Eastern Zhou era that led to the collapse of the feudal order. In ancient China, the only major actor contributing to the collapse of the feudal order was the aristocratic minister, though in the process many less fortunate aristocratic lineages also fell.

Chinese scholars have tried to explain the collapse of the ancient Chinese feudal system, with varying success.¹³ In general, my feeling is that ancient Chinese feudalism was much less stable than European feudalism. In the post-Western Zhou political order, the Chinese feudal system was maintained only by the kinship ties between the dukes and the Western Zhou royal house.¹⁴ In comparison with feudalism in Europe, Chinese feudalism did not include a personal, contractual relationship that bonded the Zhou king and local dukes together, it did not coexist with a powerful church that had a strong interest in regulating the behavior of the dukes and aristocrats,¹⁵ and it did not have a system of primogeniture to prevent the aristocratic lineages from multiplying excessively.¹⁶ Moreover,

11. See Head and Landes (1992) and Speed (1996, chap. 17) for the actions of popes and bishops as peace-makers, and for the development of the Peace of God and Truce of God movements in Europe during the High Middle Ages.

12. For example, Du (1990, p. 79) asserts that, during the early Eastern Zhou period, while the aristocrats fought from chariots, the commoner combatants fought on foot alongside the chariots. With the rise of infantry warfare, however, aristocrats had to fight in the same manner as foot soldiers. Such a change in the nature of warfare placed aristocrat and commoner combatants on an equal footing and signaled the decline of aristocratic power. It must be stressed that the Chinese situation was very different from that of medieval Europe. In medieval Europe, the rise of infantry quickly made knightly cavalry warfare outmoded. In China, however, the rise of infantry warfare only increased the infantry/chariot ratio in the army 2.5 times, from 30:1 (during a large part of the Age of Hegemons) to 75:1 (during the Age of Total War) (Chen 1991, pp. 138–45; Du 1990, p. 72). During the same period, however, the major states all increased the size of their armies dozens of times (see chapter 8); that is, even though the infantry/chariot ratio increased only 2.5 times, a state would still have many times more chariots than they had had before. Clearly, such change in the infantry/chariot ratio would not destroy the aristocrats' power. On the contrary, if we take the reasoning a little further, we will arrive at the conclusion that the new infantry/chariot ratio would actually contribute to the enhancement of aristocratic power, because now aristocrats had more foot soldiers per unit to lead and therefore became more prestigious as well as powerful.

13. Qian (1994, p. 82): Qu (2003, pp. 231–58). Their views will not be summarized here, since He (1996, pp. 168–75) has given a good review of the literature.

14. See chapter 2 for the origin of Western Zhou kinship-based feudalism.

15. Speed (1996, pp. 215–28).

16. Goody (1983, pp. 118–23). With the exception of the ducal position, which in theory was inherited by the eldest son, Eastern Zhou aristocrats practiced partible inheritance. All the male heirs received properties and aristocratic titles (with the eldest inheriting the father's title and position and the rest receiving lesser aristocratic ranks). For example, all three younger sons of Duke Huan of Lu (the Three Huans) obtained ministerial level aristocratic ranks and their elder brother (i.e., Duke Zhuang) inherited the ducal title (see chapter 4). Also, all four sons

European monarchies were able to establish standing armies under their direct control, but the armies in most Chinese dukedoms became the private property of the aristocratic ministers soon after the secondary feudalization. In short, when kinship ties between the lineages weakened after a number of generations, lineage law and the rites and rituals associated with it were simply not enough to hold the ancient Chinese feudal system together for very long.¹⁷

To validate the argument that the collapse of the ancient Chinese feudal system was the result of the rising power of the aristocratic ministers at the expense of the ducal houses, I ran a regression analysis to assess the relationship between succession hazard and the strength of the aristocratic lineages in the nine important states during the Spring and Autumn period. The succession hazard is defined as the percentage of reigning dukes assassinated in a given state. My previous discussion of the assassination of four of five dukes in Qi by the powerful aristocratic ministers shows that the existence of powerful aristocratic ministers in a state induced power struggles either between the duke and aristocratic ministers, or among the aristocratic ministers themselves, with the duke involuntarily involved. In both cases, the duke might be assassinated if his side lost. Since dukes were most often assassinated by supposedly subordinate but powerful aristocrats, I take a completed reign to indicate the strength of ducal power vis-à-vis the power of the aristocratic ministers. In the regression, the data on the succession hazard were constructed based on *Zuo's Commentary* and *Grand Historian*. *Zuo's Commentary* also contains rich accounts of various activities of important members of aristocratic families, and this allows us to construct the family trees of many aristocratic lineages. The aristocratic strength of a state in the regression is measured by the total number of generations of all the aristocratic lineages in that state. For instance, if a state had three aristocratic lineages, two of which lasted for nine generations, and the third for five generations, then the aristocratic strength of that state is coded as twenty-three.¹⁸ Aristocratic strength is thus defined based on the two assumptions. First, the more members of the aristocratic lineages that were recorded in the received texts of a given state, the more powerful the aristocratic lineages are assumed to have been in that state. Second, an aristocratic lineage's political influence is in proportion to the number of generations the lineage was able to retain prominence in state politics. Historians tend to see Spring and Autumn politics as dominated by fifteen states: Chu, Jin, Qi, Qin, Lu, Zheng, Song, Wey, (Eastern) Zhou, Wu, Yue, Yan, Chen, Cao, and Xu,¹⁹ of which I included the nine largest in the regression

of Yangshe Zhi (Tongti Bohua, Shuxiang, Shuyu, and Shuhu), a second-rank Jin minister, obtained ministerial level ranks (Li and Li 1999, p. 253). The Chinese aristocracy at the time had roughly seven ranks (one chief minister, three ministerial ranks, and three *shi* ranks). Therefore, if an aristocrat held the highest rank, it would take quite a few generations for one of his collateral descendants to drop out of the aristocratic rank.

17. See chapter 2 for the origin, nature, and development of lineage law in the Western Zhou context.

18. The data on the aristocracy lineages of the major states are from He (1996, pp. 202–3).

19. Hsu (1999, p. 547).

analysis: Chu, Jin, Qi, Qin, Lu, Zheng, Song, Wey, and Zhou. I excluded the other six states based on two related considerations: the strength of the state and the availability of data. The feudal crisis tended to develop more fully in the stronger states with large territories, populations, and greater resources; and the received texts record more data on ducal successions and the activities of the aristocratic lineages for these states. I measured the strength of a state by the number of wars it initiated, assuming that stronger states were more capable of maintaining sustained aggression. Song, Wey, and Zhou (which had the lowest numbers of wars of the nine selected states) waged thirty-five, eighteen, and seven wars, respectively. On the other hand, Chen and Cai waged only one war each (both minor conflicts), and there is no record of Cao and Yan initiating any aggression.²⁰ Wu and Yue (which waged twenty-six and two wars, respectively) are excluded from the analysis because both states rose to prominence in the mid-sixth century BCE, when the feudal crisis was already well under way. Moreover, in comparison with the other states, the historical records of these two states are too few to generate relevant data for our purposes.

Figure 5.1 shows a strong positive correlation between a state's aristocratic strength and succession hazard ($r^2=0.66$). It also shows that during the Spring and Autumn period, close to half of the dukes in Lu, Qi, and Jin, the states where the feudal crisis was most acute, were assassinated during their reign. We can also explain part of the regression residuals based on the information we have. Compared with the other states, Zhou's aristocratic strength was greater, but the Zhou kings' succession hazard was less. Although Zhou had declined and was a rather small state during the early part of the Spring and Autumn period, as noted in chapter 4, many states that had developed from the Western Zhou city-states system still considered Zhou to be their nominal overlord. A hegemon that originated in the Zhou city-state system would have wanted Zhou's endorsement in order to increase his legitimacy and, consequently, was obliged to maintain Zhou's political stability. Excessive succession struggles in Zhou could be seen by the other states as a sign that the hegemon had lost his ability to protect the Zhou court, and this would weaken the other states' belief in the hegemon's power.

Several stories in *Zuo's Commentary* relate the intervention of a leading state in a Zhou succession struggle to restore the "legitimate" heir as the Zhou ruler. For example, in 674–673 BCE (Zhuang 20–21), Duke Li of Zheng (r. 700–697,

20. A word on why some historians have considered Yan, Chen, Cao, and Xu to be major states is in order. Yan has been considered a major power of the early Eastern Zhou era mainly because it rose to become one of the seven major states during the Age of Total War, even though it is mentioned only a few times in the received texts because, during the early Eastern Zhou period, it was seldom involved in interstate politics. As for Chen, Cao, and Xu, historians have considered them "major" mainly because they appear in the received texts more frequently than other states. During the Age of Hegemons, a hegemon often mobilized many states to fight a war, and these states were more likely to be recorded in *Zuo's Commentary*. Because of their locations, Chen, Cao, and Xu were all frequently involved in the Chu-Jin rivalry, which gave them more exposure in the received texts and thus misled historians to see them as major states.

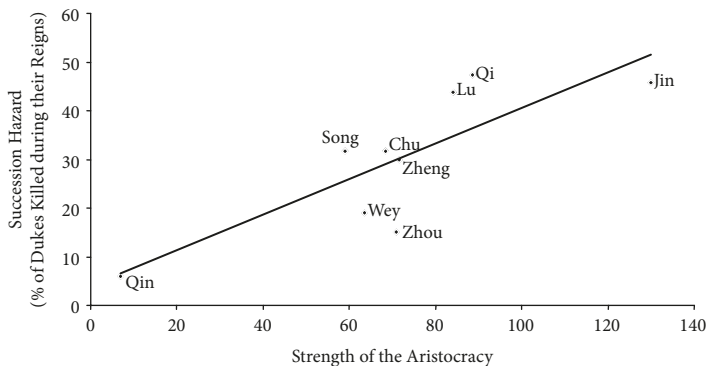


FIGURE 5.1. Succession hazards of the major Spring and Autumn states

680–673 BCE), after a failed attempt to settle the conflict between King Hui of Zhou (r. 676–652) and his brother Prince Tui (who obtained the throne after forcing the king into exile), attacked Zhou, assassinated the prince, and restored King Hui to power.²¹ In 636 BCE (Xi 24), King Xiang of Zhou was forced into exile by his brother Prince Dai in a palace intrigue, but in the following year, Duke Wen of Jin assassinated the prince and restored the king to power.²² In 520 BCE, Prince Chao assassinated King Dao of Zhou (r. 520 BCE) and proclaimed himself the Zhou king. At that time, the feudal crisis in Jin was severe and Jin's aristocratic lineages were no longer very interested in interstate domination. As a result, Jin did not immediately send troops to intervene. As recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 24, 518 BCE),²³ during a visit to Jin, Youji (Zi Taishu), a Zheng minister, criticized Jin for not intervening in Zhou's succession crisis: "When a wine bottle is empty, the wine vat should feel ashamed; when the Zhou court experiences a succession crisis, it is you, the state of Jin, that should feel ashamed." The record goes on to describe how the Jin aristocratic ministers decided to intervene following Youji's efforts at persuasion. In the end, Jin sent troops to Zhou, disposed of Prince Dai, and enthroned a new king. Intervention by the big states with the intention to restore the "legitimate" heir as the king greatly reduced Zhou's succession hazard and contributed to the large residuals in the regression result.

Since the beginning of the Age of Hegemons, the dukes and their advisers had been keenly aware of the problems associated with secondary feudalization. All the dukes faced the same dilemma after successful military expansion: it was always good to build bigger military strongholds (cities) in the expanded

21. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 214–18).

22. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 425–26, 431–32).

23. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1451–52).

territories for defensive purposes, but the bigger the city, the more likely it was that the aristocratic minister who controlled it would make it his own power base from which to undermine the ducal power.²⁴ *Zuo's Commentary* is filled with stories of how big cities controlled by aristocratic ministers posed dangers to dukedoms. Shen Wuyu, a Chu minister, once used the tail-wagging-the-dog metaphor to warn King Ling of Chu of the dangers in strengthening feudal domains.²⁵ Mencius's famous line, "The five hegemonies were criminals to the three kings, today's dukes are the criminals to the five hegemonies, and today's ministers are criminals to the dukes," was perhaps an expression of the conventional wisdom of the age.²⁶

Larger states usually faced more problems because they had more territory that could end up under the control of an aristocratic minister. The feudal crisis was therefore more severe in Jin and Qi than in other states. The crisis in Jin was no doubt the most critical one. It triggered the collapse of the hegemonic system of interstate relations and stimulated the waves of reforms that came after. Of the seven major states emerging at the beginning of the Age of Total War, three were created by the aristocratic ministers who had partitioned Jin in 453 BCE. In the next two sections, we shall examine in greater detail the feudal crisis in Jin and how that crisis fostered the collapse of the hegemonic interstate system, led to the partitioning of Jin into three states, and subsequently stimulated further waves of bureaucratization.

THE 546 BCE TRUCE AGREEMENT

For the Jin state the 546 BCE truce agreement was a direct consequence of the feudal crisis. Jin had had problems ever since Duke Zhao, in the first year of his reign, bestowed a city named Quwo on his uncle Huanshu (see chapter 3). As the polity at Quwo gradually grew stronger, the rulers of Quwo took part in the succession struggles of the Jin court and then warred against the dukes of Jin on and off between 739 and 679 BCE, until Jin's victory finally reunified the state of Jin.²⁷ The prolonged military competition left a deep imprint on Jin politics. Since the growing power of one lineage of ducal descendants was the chief cause of the prolonged warfare, after reunification Jin rulers tried hard to avoid strengthening the power of the ducal descendants. Duke Xian (r. 676–651 BCE), the son of

24. For instance, in the *Discourses of the States* ("Discourses of Chu 1"; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978), Shen Wuyu, a Chu minister, tried to persuade King Ling of Chu not to construct big cities at the frontiers. In the recorded speech, Shen provides example after example on how building cities away from the capital in Jin, Qi, Zheng, Wey, Song, and Lu had resulted in the weakening of the state power, assassinations of dukes, and even civil wars. Most stories in Shen's accounts also appear in *Zuo's Commentary* in independent narratives about battles and regicides.

25. *Discourses of the States* ("Discourses of Chu 1"; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, p. 549).

26. *Mengzi* ("Lilou 6"; reproduced in Yang 1980, p. 287).

27. *Grand Historian* ("The History of Jin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1638–40).

Duke Wu, together with his adviser Shiwei, found ways to expel or assassinate members of the Huanshu and Zhuangbo lineages, in order to destroy the power base of these two lines of ducal descendants.²⁸ To avoid future problems, Shiwei even tried to undermine the power bases of the sons of Duke Xian, going well beyond Duke Xian's wishes.²⁹

Not stopping with the elimination of powerful ducal descendants, Duke Xian also promoted aristocrats who had no blood ties with the ducal house—whose families had been indigenous aristocrats in Jin since its formation in the early Western Zhou period. It was in this context that Duke Xian granted the territories of the two newly conquered states to his generals Zhao Su and Bi Wan in 661 BCE.³⁰ Duke Wen (r. 636–628 BCE) further granted newly acquired territories to non-kin ministers, many of whom had been his loyal followers during his nineteen years of exile.³¹

Duke Xian and Duke Wen effectively destroyed the power bases of the ducal lineages and promoted non-kin aristocrats. But, in the long run, that was equally detrimental to the dukedom. About the time of Duke Ling's assassination by Zhao Chuan in 607 BCE, Jin's ministerial aristocrats began to prevail in politics. In the following years—although the reigns of Duke Jing (r. 599–581 BCE) and Duke Dao (r. 573–558 BCE) saw more cordial relations between the dukes and their ministers—the power of the aristocratic families continued to rise at the expense of ducal power, finally reaching the point where the dukes were no longer contenders in Jin's domestic strife. During the entire sixth century BCE and beyond, major political conflict among the lineages headed by aristocratic ministers was endemic in Jin. *Zuo's Commentary* records quite a few incidents in Jin between 596 and 550 BCE. In 596 BCE (Xuan 13), Xianhu, a descendant of Xianzhen, was assassinated and members of his lineage were killed.³² In 583 BCE (Cheng 8), Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo were assassinated, and the Zhao lineage was almost entirely wiped out.³³ In 576 BCE (Cheng 15), Bo Zong was assassinated, and his

28. It is recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhuang 2–5, 671–669 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 225–32) that Duke Xian, advised by Shiwei, adopted a divide-and-rule strategy, first enticing the members of the Huanshu and Zhuangbo lineages to fight each other, and after they had weakened one other, assassinating all the powerful members of those lineages.

29. For example, in 661 BCE, Duke Xian ordered the construction of city walls for the crown prince, who was stationed at Quwo. Knowing that solid city walls would greatly enhance the city's defensive capacity, which, in turn, would encourage the crown prince to rebel against the duke, Shiwei told the crown prince that owning a city with a strong defensive capacity would only invite suspicions and bring trouble on himself, thus persuading the crown prince to flee before the city walls were even built. Also, in 655 BCE, when Duke Xian asked Shiwei to construct city walls for the two strongholds controlled by his two other sons, Princes Yiwu and Chonger, Shiwei ordered the walls constructed of firewood mixed with earth (such walls can easily be breached or burned down by an attacking army). When Duke Xian learned what Shiwei had done, he reprimanded Shiwei, but Shiwei not only shrugged off the duke's reprimand but also rebuked him for shortsightedness (*Zuo's Commentary*, Min 1, 661 BCE, Xi 5, 655 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 258–59, 303–5).

30. *Zuo's Commentary* (Min 1; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 258).

31. Li and Li (1999, pp. 80–85); Zou (1986).

32. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 751).

33. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 838–39).

son, Bo Zhouli, fled to Chu to escape the persecution of the Xi lineage.³⁴ In 574 BCE, the Xi lineage was eliminated. In 573 BCE (Cheng 18), Xu Tong, the man behind the purge of the Xi lineage, was assassinated.³⁵ Between 552 and 550 BCE (Xiang 21–23) Luan Ying's lineage, together with ten ministers who were close to Luan Ying, was eliminated.³⁶ In short, by the mid-sixth century BCE, Jin politics was so caught up in murderous rivalries among the ministers that any coherent interstate politics became impossible. It is no wonder that Jin badly needed a truce agreement with its archenemy Chu.

Chu also wanted the truce, but for a different reason. State power in Chu was centralized in the hands of the Chu king (see chapter 3).³⁷ As in Jin, only members of the aristocratic lineages could hold official positions in Chu, but most major official positions were not hereditary, which prevented any one of the aristocratic lineages from accumulating enough power to challenge the king. For the entire Eastern Zhou era, *Zuo's Commentary* records only one incident (Xuan 4, 605 BCE) in which an aristocratic lineage rebelled against the Chu king.³⁸ And when it did, the rebels were slaughtered, and the power of the Chu king was further strengthened. *Lingyin* (chief minister) was the highest and most powerful position in the Chu government. Accordingly, Chu kings appointed only the most trusted people to that position and also took measures to keep their power in check. After the 605 BCE rebellion, other than a few chief ministers whose exceptional abilities had brought them to that position, most of the *lingyin* in Chu were selected from among the princes. Furthermore, the position was neither hereditary nor life-tenured, even for a prince. King Gong (r. 590–560 BCE) appointed three chief ministers during his reign, King Kang (r. 559–545 BCE) and King Ping (r. 528–516 BCE) respectively, appointed four chief ministers.³⁹ To further divide the power of the chief ministers, in the beginning of the sixth century BCE, Chu also established the offices of left chief minister and right chief minister.⁴⁰ Finally, chief ministers in Chu were harshly disciplined by the kings. The records in *Zuo's Commentary* show that, between 632 and 528 BCE, eight chief ministers in Chu were either assassinated or forced to commit suicide by the kings for reasons ranging from losing a battle to corruption to simply being perceived by the king as too powerful.⁴¹ Nothing like this could have happened in Jin, Qi, or

34. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 876).

35. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 904).

36. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1052–70).

37. Creel (1964, p. 181); He and Zhang (1984); Y. Li (1999, p. 297).

38. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 679–82).

39. Y. Li (1999, p. 297).

40. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xuan 11, 598 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 711) records that Chu's left chief minister brought troops to attack Song. *Zuo's Commentary* (Cheng 16, 575 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 880) records that Chu deployed its army to save Zheng from Jin's attack and that Chu's minister of war led the central army, the left chief minister led the left army, and right chief minister led the right army.

41. In 632 BCE, Chu troops led by Chief Minister Ziyu were defeated by Jin in the Battle of Chengpu. Ziyu committed suicide, after learning that King Cheng of Chu (r. 671–626 BCE) would execute him for the loss. In 627 BCE,

the other central-eastern states, and it clearly demonstrated the strength of Chu kings vis-à-vis the aristocratic ministers.

In comparison with Jin, significantly fewer rulers in Chu were assassinated in succession struggles (figure 5.1). The kings who were killed during succession struggles were always the victims of brothers or uncles who considered themselves somehow entitled to the throne, not of members of aristocratic lineages, as was the case in Jin, Qi, and other states that had experienced the feudal crisis. This kind of succession problem was different in nature and was to persist throughout the entire history of imperial China. Succession crises of this kind did not lead a state into a feudal crisis because a new king who came to power in a succession struggle was likely to adopt policies that further centralized state power.

What brought Chu to the negotiating table with Jin, in my view, was geopolitics. Our war network patterns show that Jin was Chu's only major enemy before 585 BCE (see figures 4.1 and 4.2a). In other words, early on in the Age of Hegemons, Chu was the only powerful state in the south, which allowed it to focus its geopolitical attention exclusively on the northern states. Yet the ever-expanding warfare gradually drew the peripheral states into the war theater. More relevant to the weakening of Chu's geopolitical position was the rise of Wu in the southeast. Wu appears for the first time in *Zuo's Commentary* in 584 BCE (Cheng 7).⁴² In that year Wu invaded Tan, a state located about 420 kilometers north of Wu's capital. From its long-range fighting capability, it could be inferred that Wu at the time already had impressive military power. For the same year *Zuo's Commentary* also carries another entry related to Wu. It relates that Wuchen, a Chu county minister who had defected to Jin, acted as an envoy of Jin to Wu. During his mission, Wuchen persuaded Wu to rise against Chu. He had brought with him thirty chariots plus soldiers who were skilled in archery and chariot warfare, and he taught Wu commanders how to deploy military formations in battle.⁴³ It is hard to assess exactly how important this kind of diplomacy and diffusion of military technologies were to Wu's ascendancy, but we do know that Wu indeed posed an ever-increasing threat to Chu thereafter. As figure 4.2b in chapter 4 clearly reveals, by 546 BCE, Wu and Chu had already clashed, both directly and indirectly. Of the five major direct confrontations between Chu and Wu between 570 and 546 BCE, each state lost two, and one ended in a draw.⁴⁴

Chief Minister Zishang of Chu, having been framed, was executed by King Cheng. In 605 BCE, King Zhuang of Chu executed Chief Minister Dou Ban and then his newly appointed chief minister, Ziyue. In 575 BCE, Chief Minister Zifan committed suicide after losing a war with Jin in Yanling. In 568 BCE, King Gong killed Chief Minister Zixin on charges of corruption. In 551 BCE, King Kang killed Chief Minister Zinan and his retainer Guan Qi because Guan Qi had more horses pulling his carriage than his rank allowed for. In 528 BCE, King Ping killed Chief Minister Ziqi and eliminated the Yan lineage, which had a close relationship with Ziqi.

42. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 834–35).

43. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 835).

44. King Zhufan of Wu (r. 560–548 BCE) died of wounds received in the drawn battle, which increased the hostility between the two states.

By the mid-sixth century BCE, Chu, facing enemies on two fronts, was interested in a truce agreement with Jin.

Not only did the two hegemonies need a truce, the smaller states located between Jin and Chu were even more so inclined. During the Chu-Jin rivalry, which lasted almost a century, smaller states caught in between were frequently plagued by the two rivals' fighting on their territories. The hegemonies also forced them to pick sides, and giving their allegiance to one hegemon often invited attack from the other or from one of its allies. Once they had taken sides, the smaller states were forced to pay tributes and other dues to the chosen hegemon as well as to contribute troops to battles from which they benefited very little, if at all.⁴⁵ Therefore, in 580 BCE, Hua Yuan, a Song minister, acted as go-between and finally brought Jin and Chu to a truce agreement in 579 BCE. This truce was very short-lived. Three short years later Chu attacked Zheng, then an ally of Jin, breaking the truce agreement and triggering a series of military engagements between the two hegemonies. In 546 BCE, when Wu's military pressure had become even heavier upon Chu, Xiang Xu, also a Song minister, arranged another meeting, including Jin, Chu, and many smaller states. At this point both Chu and Jin were increasingly bedeviled by their own problems, making a more sustainable truce possible.

The 546 BCE truce agreement between Jin and Chu, together with many other smaller states, was an important turning point in Eastern Zhou history. The truce agreement paradoxically fostered the collapse of the hegemonic system of interstate relations. It also heightened the feudal crisis in several major states and stimulated their final transitions to bureaucratic states.

THE COLLAPSE OF HEGEMONIC INTERSTATE POLITICS

The 546 BCE truce agreement sounded the death knell for the hegemonic interstate politics that had prevailed for about two hundred years. Most historians believe that the Age of Hegemonies spanned the entire Spring and Autumn period

45. In numerous entries *Zuo's Commentary* reveals the heavy burdens of tributes and other obligations imposed by the hegemonies on the smaller states. For example, in 649 BCE (Xi 11; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 339) Chu attacked and then annexed Huang because the Duke of Huang refused to pay tribute to Chu. In 570 BCE (Xian 3; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 928) it is recorded that the heavy dues imposed by Chu on Chen pushed the latter to change its allegiance to Jin. In 549 BCE (Xian 24; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1089) it is recorded that the tax burdens imposed by Jin on smaller states were so heavy that Zichan (Zheng's chief minister) wrote to Fan Xuanzi (Jin's chief minister) to request a tax cut. The most telling example of smaller states coerced to join wars detrimental to their interests happened in Zheng: After Zheng switched allegiance from Jin to Chu in 564 BCE, Chu ordered Zheng troops to join in attacking Song, Wey, and Lu, states allied with Jin. The ensuing military conflicts depleted Zheng's resources and triggered domestic strife in which three chief ministers of Zheng were killed (*Zuo's Commentary*, Xiang 10, 563 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 979–80). In the same pages, *Zuo's Commentary* also records a conversation between Zizhan and Zisi, two Zheng ministers, after Zheng was ordered to attack Wey. Zizhan said: "We have to attack Wey. We have already offended Jin. If we do not follow the order, and we offend Chu, our country will perish immediately." Zisi was dubious: "Our country is already exhausted by the constant warfare." Zizhan replied: "If we offend two big states, we are doomed to perish. Is not exhaustion a better outcome than perishing?"

(i.e., between 770 and 481 BCE). They therefore include Wu (and some even include Yue) as hegemonies after the decline of Jin and Chu. This is a myth. Wu and Yue surely had hegemonic ambitions, but clearly the two states had never achieved military power anything like what Jin and Chu had enjoyed at their peaks. What shaped interstate relations and the direction of history after the 546 BCE truce agreement was not hegemonic politics but the feudal crisis.⁴⁶

During the Age of Hegemons, when a hegemonic state went to war, it often demanded its ally states participate. An army spearheaded by Jin, for example, sometimes included troops from as many as thirteen states. This aspect of hegemonic warfare allows us to test whether the hegemonic interstate system still prevailed after the 546 BCE truce agreement by comparing the average number of states involved in a war before and after the truce agreement. That the hegemonic system no longer prevailed would be supported by a sharp decline in the average number of states participating in a war after 546 BCE. I use 610–546 BCE and 545–481 BCE as the two periods of comparison because (a) 481 BCE is commonly considered the end of the Spring and Autumn period, and (b) the periods 610–546 BCE and 545–481 BCE have sixty-four-year span, making the comparison, with 546 BCE as the crux, chronologically symmetrical.

The results show that before 546 BCE, the average number of states taking part in a war initiated by Jin or Chu was 4.0, but after 546 BCE the average is reduced to 2.35. That Jin and Chu lost hegemonic status after 546 BCE is indisputable ($p < 0.0001$). But was their loss balanced by the emergence of other hegemonies in Eastern Zhou interstate politics? This question can be answered by calculating the average number of states participating in wars begun by Wu, Yue, Qi, or Qin (the four states whose potential military power could fulfill their hegemonic ambition); that number is 2.14 before 546 BCE and 2.41 afterward. The difference is statistically insignificant ($p = 0.13$). Even considering only Wu, the most likely candidate for new hegemonic status, the average number of states engaging in a war begun by Wu before and after 546 BCE increased only from 2.0 to 2.68. Although the increase is statistically significant ($p = 0.02$), demonstrating Wu's bidding for hegemonic status, the figure of 2.68 is not significantly higher than 2.35 (the average number of states engaging in a war initiated by Jin or Chu after 546 BCE; $p = 0.4$). In other words, the number of states that Jin, Chu, and Wu were able to mobilize as military allies was pretty much the same even at the time when Wu's power was at its prime. Wu was obviously far from the hegemonic status that Chu and Jin had both enjoyed before 546 BCE. It could be argued that the average number of states engaging in a war declined after 546 BCE, because most small states that

46. Jin (1983, p. 242) once suggested that during the late stage of hegemonic politics, the militarily strong states might not have wanted to be hegemonies and the states that acted as hegemonies might not have been strong. Even though Jin still insisted that the last two hegemonies were Wu and Yue, his statement actually acknowledges the collapse of hegemonic politics after 546 BCE.

could be led into war by a hegemon had already been conquered by the major powers. Based on my own counts, however, some fifty states still existed in ancient China in 546 BCE. In 529 BCE, fourteen states participated in an interstate meeting headed by Jin.⁴⁷ In 506 BCE, Jin organized another interstate meeting attended by nineteen states.⁴⁸ When Wu's power was at its zenith, the states located close to Wu included Zheng, Yan, Xu, Dun, Hu, Shen, Huaiyi, Cheng, Cai, Chao, Ju, Yue, Lu, and Chu. Had Wu really been able to lead an interstate coalition of its own, a sufficient number of states would still have been available to be coerced into that coalition.

During the Age of Hegemons, Jin and Chu both routinely forced small states to attend the frequent interstate meetings they organized.⁴⁹ As the two examples provided in the foregoing paragraph show, even when Jin was supposedly no longer playing a hegemonic role in interstate politics, in 529 and 506 BCE, it was still able to organize large-scale interstate meetings attended, respectively, by fourteen and nineteen states, according to extant records. A state's ability to compel such interstate meetings also indicated hegemonic status. At the height of its power, Wu, however, only held two such meetings, one in 487 BCE with only the state of Lu, and another in 482 BCE with Jin and many other states of central-eastern China. But during the 482 BCE meeting, Wu's capital was sacked by Yue, ending Wu's hegemonic dream.

The end of the hegemonic interstate system can also be seen from the changes in war network patterns from before to after the 546 BCE truce agreement. Before 546 BCE, the war networks of ancient China were closely connected, and, as we saw in chapter 4, Jin and Chu were the two central contenders (figure 4.2b).⁵⁰ After 546 BCE, however, the pattern changed from being a triangular network with Jin, Chu, and Qi at the apices (see particularly figure 4.2a) to a square-shaped network with Jin, Chu, Qi, and Wu at the four corners (Qin was virtually detached from the warring states system in this period; see figure 5.2). If we look at figure 5.2 closely, it is easy to see that after 546 BCE, the war theater was no longer a closely connected entity but had been separated into two largely unconnected war networks: northern and southern. These are directly linked by only two lines representing wars that occurred very late in this period: a war between Wu and Lu (487 BCE) and two wars between Wu and Qi (485 and 484 BCE). Figure 5.2, therefore, shows that even though Wu competed with Chu for domination in the south, it had little to do with most of the states in the north,⁵¹ which was still the

47. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 13; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1342).

48. *Zuo's Commentary* (Ding 4; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1533).

49. Many meetings of this kind ended with the sealing of blood covenants called *meng*. For the nature of the covenant and its wide range of usages during the early part of Eastern Zhou, see Lewis (1990, pp. 43–50).

50. See chapter 4 for other characteristics of this war network pattern.

51. After Jin was no longer active in the interstate system, Qi tried for a number of years to gain power in the north. This triggered many direct and indirect conflicts between Jin and Qi, with Jin gaining the upper hand most of the time. The war networks in the north show Jin and Qi as the two opposing core states.

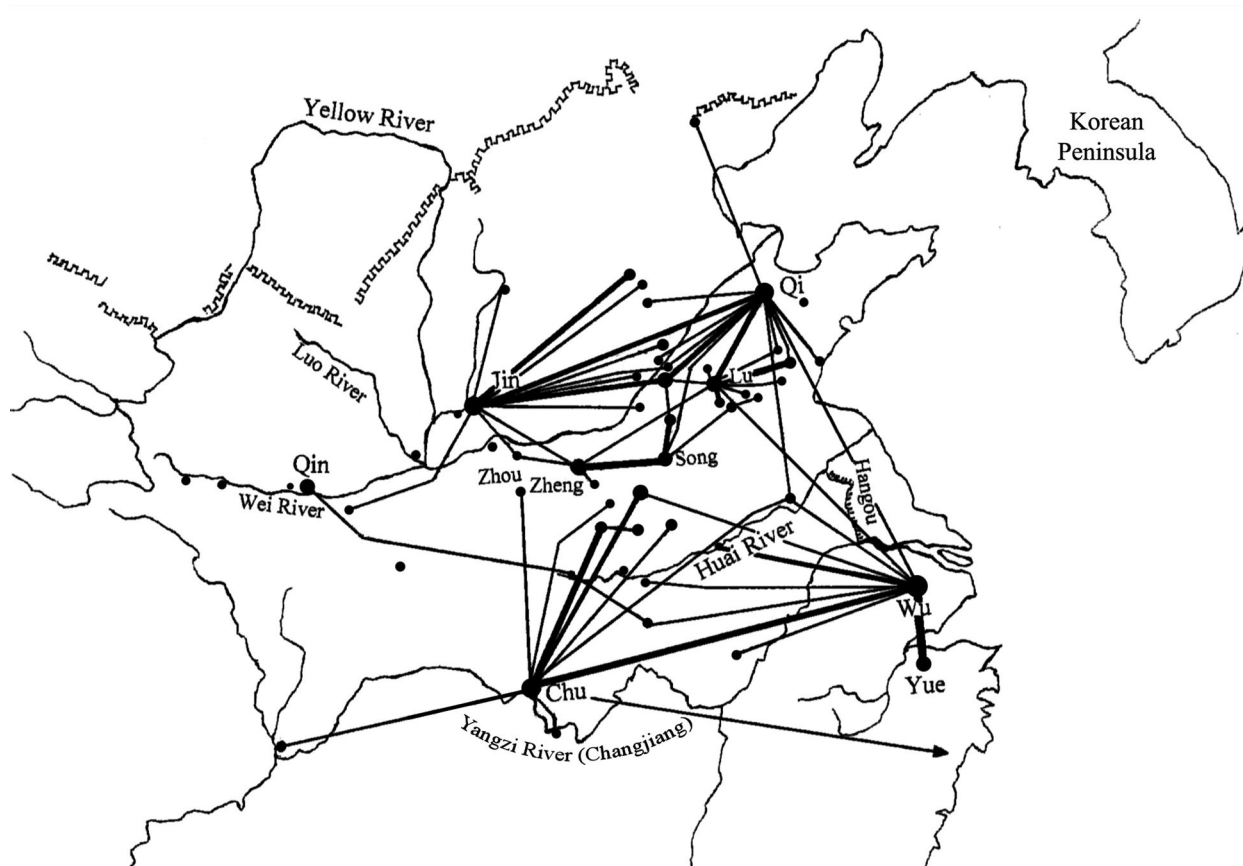


FIGURE 5.2. War networks for the years between 545 and 473 BCE

center of ancient China's politics and civilization. Wu's hegemon status was obviously not equal to that of Jin and Chu before 546 BCE.

Behind these numbers and figures just presented is the historical reality that, once Jin and Chu faded out of the hegemonic competition, other states began looking to fill the vacuum. Indeed, after the 546 BCE truce agreement, Qi, Wu, and later, Yue all became much more militarily active. Among these newly rising powers, Wu's performance was certainly the most impressive. In 506 BCE Wu waged perhaps one of the most ingenious campaigns of the time. Between the tenth and the twelfth months Wu troops advanced about 1,300 kilometers, defeated the Chu army in a series of battles, and finally sacked the Chu capital. Had it not been for the assistance of Qin from the northwest and Yue from the east, Chu could have been conquered by Wu in this campaign. And in 484 BCE Wu was able to defeat Qi at Ailing, capture Qi's chief commander, and kill 3,000 of Qi's elite warriors on the field. The battle of Ailing allowed Wu to extend its influence northward, leading to the 482 BCE interstate meeting at Huangchi (see chapter 7). But Wu's ascendancy proved to be ephemeral. It was when most of the Wu army was in the north at Huangchi that Yue attacked Wu and sacked its capital. Nine short years later, in 473 BCE, Wu was completely conquered by Yue. Yue had also intended to bid for hegemonic status after the elimination of Wu, but its influence was never that far-reaching, even after Yue moved its capital from Guiji to Langya in the north.

Two related factors contributed to Wu's sudden and speedy demise. First, by attacking Lu and Qi in the north and bringing most of its troops to the Huangchi interstate meeting, Wu had obviously overextended itself. The *Discourses of the States* contains several long stories of Wu Zixu, a Wu minister, trying to persuade King Fuchai of Wu (r. 495–473 BCE) not to extend his power far northward because Wu's real enemy was the nearby state of Yue. King Fuchai, however, did not listen.⁵² Second, and more important but much less taken into account by historians, was Wu's poor geographic location. Wu's political center was at the lower reach of the Yangzi River, close to present-day Shanghai, and Wu's main military strength lay in its navy. When fighting Chu, Wu could use the Huai and Yangzi Rivers to transport soldiers and supplies.⁵³ But because none of the rivers around Wu flowed northward, Wu's strong navy afforded it no advantage in its northern expansion. To overcome the deficiency, two big canals were constructed, the first connecting the Yangzi with the Huai and the second connecting the Huai to the Yellow River water system. The two canals combined were hundreds of kilometers long and took many years to complete. Such large-scale construction projects in conjunction with the frequent wars must have depleted Wu's resources

52. *Discourses of the States* ("Discourses of Wu"; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, pp. 598–99).

53. Both Wu and Chu tended to use the Huai River for military transportation at the time (Shi 1963, p. 74).

and created the opportunity for Yue to destroy the seemingly mighty Wu in only nine years.⁵⁴

In hindsight it becomes apparent that even as Jin and Chu were weakening, the other states were unable to alter the general geopolitical picture of the time, either because of their unfavorable geographic locations (e.g., Wu and Yue) or because of their limited military strength (e.g., Qi). Consequently, notwithstanding that Wu, Yue, and Qi did try to insert themselves into hegemonic politics, the historical dynamism hinged upon what happened in Jin. It was the metamorphosis of Jin that brought forth a new type of state and a new style of warfare, which in the end paved the road to the Qin conquest of China.

THE DEMISE OF JIN

The feudal crisis had begun to eat away at Jin before 546 BCE. The historical importance of the 546 BCE truce was that, once a major outside threat disappeared, internal conflicts resulting from the feudal crisis ran rampant. In this way, the truce agreement fostered the collapse of Jin. This sequence is well captured in a conversation that supposedly took place in 575 BCE between Fan Wenzi, then Jin's chief minister, and Luan Shu and Xi Zhi, two other Jin ministers, before the battle of Yanling between Chu and Jin. Fan wanted to avoid the war, but both Luan Shu and Xi Zhi urged it vehemently. Fan pointed out to them the importance of Jin keeping Chu as an archenemy:⁵⁵

Our ancestors waged many wars because Qin, Di, Qi, and Chu were all very powerful back then. If our ancestors had not fought hard, their lineages would have withered. Now, three of our contenders have been weakened. The only enemy left for us is Chu. Only a sage could be free from both external threats and domestic problems. Since we are not sages, once we are free from external threats, internal troubles are bound to run deep. Why not keep Chu as an external threat and let us stay alert?

When Fan Wenzi made his argument, the lineages of Luan Shu and Xi Zhi were already in serious conflict. The year before in 576 BCE, Xi Zhi's lineage had assassinated Bo Zong, a Jin minister, and compelled his son Bo Zhouli to flee to Chu. A year later, in 574 BCE, Xi Zhi's entire lineage was said to have been executed as a result of a palace intrigue.⁵⁶ Fan Wenzi's appreciation of contemporary realities,

54. Wen Zhong, a Yue minister, is recorded as saying: "The people of Wu have been really exhausted. They have also experienced several years of bad harvest. The Wu people are not even able to buy coarse grain in the market now. All the granaries in Wu are empty." (*Discourses of the States*, "Discourses of Wu"; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, p. 618). Although such comments from a Yue minister could well have been biased, considering how quickly the mighty Wu was conquered by Yue, the speech must have contained elements of truth.

55. *Zuo's Commentary* (Cheng 16, 575 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 882).

56. *Zuo's Commentary* (Cheng 15, 576 BCE; Cheng 17, 574 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 876, 900–962).

shares great similarities with a Simmelian insight that external conflict is functional for the maintenance of a group's internal cohesion.⁵⁷

After the 546 BCE truce Jin's involvement in the interstate rivalry quickly declined. In the sixty-four years between 610 and 546 BCE, Jin took the offensive fifty times but was only attacked by other states eleven times. Whereas between 545 and 481 BCE (also a sixty-four year span), Jin, according to my war data, took the offensive only fifteen times but was attacked eight times. This was not because Jin's overall military capacity had declined. Trying to reclaim its hegemonic status, in 529 BCE Jin organized an interstate meeting at Pingqiu, which was attended by fourteen states.⁵⁸ To advertise its military strength Jin sent its envoy to the meeting accompanied by 4,000 chariots and their troops. But this show of force could not hide the internal conflicts that were plain to see. For instance, during the meeting, Zichan, Zheng's chief minister, openly accused Jin of demanding too much tribute from the small states and forced Duke Zhao of Jin to lower the quotas. Afterward, Zi Taishu (Youji), another Zheng minister, reproached Zichan for his actions: "You should not have done that. Do you know that what you have done could invite an invasion from Jin?" To this Zichan replied: "Jin is now controlled by several powerful aristocratic lineages, each with conflicts of interest. These lineages are all busily trying to muddle along in a sea of internal conflict. How can they find energy to wage wars against another state?" Zichan was right. As discussed earlier in another context, even Jin's intervention in Zhou's succession crisis in 518 BCE was actually in part prompted by the urging of Zi Taishu.

Around 546 BCE, Jin's aristocratic lineages could be divided into two groups of different origin. The first group included three lineages that were patrilineal kin to the ducal house, the Luan, Qi, and Yangshe lineages.⁵⁹ The second and much more powerful group comprised the non-kin aristocratic lineages, the so-called six ministers. The conflicts among Jin's aristocratic lineages seem to have manifested first as clashes between these two groups. In the ducal lines the Luan lineage was the most powerful and therefore invited the first purge. After the Luan lineage was destroyed by Fan Xuanzi (Jin's chief minister and the head of the Fan lineage) in a bitter civil war in 550 BCE, the less powerful Qi and Yangshe lineages coexisted with the non-kin aristocratic lineages for a number of years. Then, in 514 BCE, internal strife erupted within the Qi lineage. The non-kin ministers took this opportunity to eliminate the two remaining ducal lineages, dividing their

57. See Coser (1956) for a more detail discussion of this insight.

58. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 13, 529 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1353–59) recounts this interstate meeting, as well as conversations credited to Zichan and Zi Taishu.

59. The Luan lineage originated from Duke Jing (r. 858–841 BCE), the Qi lineage was from one of the descendants of Duke Xian, and the Yangshe lineage from a minor son of Duke Wu. See chapter 2 for the practice of lineage splitting in ancient China. See Li and Li (1999, pp. 246–60) for the origins of these three aristocratic lineages as well as their demise.

land into ten counties and appointing officials to manage them.⁶⁰ Subsequently, the six non-kin aristocratic ministers completely dominated Jin politics.

The precarious balance among the six non-kin lineages was soon lost. In 497 BCE, the six lineages formed into two sides, and with Zhao, Wei, Han, and Zhi on one side and Fan and Zhongxing on the other, plunged into a civil war that lasted seven years and dragged in many neighboring states, including Qi, Wey, Lu, Zheng, Song, Xianyu, and Zhou. In 491 BCE, despite this help from other states, the Fan and Zhongxing lineages were defeated and their territories divided among the four victorious lineages. Members of the vanquished lineages either fled to Qi or were slaughtered. Nor were the four victors at peace with one another for long. In 455 BCE, the Zhi lineage allied with Wei and Han to attack Zhao's stronghold, Jinyang. The whole conflict lasted almost three years, but in the end, a successful plot by the Zhao lineage broke the alliance of their attackers. The Zhi lineage was brought to an end in 453 BCE. The heads of the three surviving aristocratic lineages then partitioned Jin's territory and established three new states—Wei, Han, and Zhao (the Three Jins).⁶¹

FEUDAL CONSTRAINT ON WARFARE

The major subject of Part III is to explain the role of warfare in shaping Eastern Zhou history. Within this topic, I must first emphasize that the relationships between war and society are not unidirectional. During the Age of Hegemons, warfare led to the expansion of the states, the rise of hegemonic interstate politics, and the origin of the commandery-county system and secondary feudalization. Most historically significant of all, among the major states, war necessitated efficiency; efficiency in turn spread throughout the culture and, by affecting the culture, stimulated cumulative historical development. By the Age of Transition, however, while efficiency was an increasingly valued element in the culture, the feudal crisis and collapse of the hegemonic interstate system were strongly influencing the nature of warfare itself. In this respect, societal developments were also affecting warfare.

60. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 28, 514 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1493).

61. Arguing for the crucial roles of Eastern Zhou warfare in the emergence of bureaucracy during the Eastern Zhou era, Kiser and Cai (2003) propose that the interstate wars during this time led to high casualties among the aristocracies, thereby weakening them and facilitating the rise of bureaucracy. Their argument, though logically plausible, is historically inaccurate. Before the end of the fifth century BCE, most military encounters were still small in scale. There is also no evidence that the aristocrats suffered higher casualties than the commoners in these small-scale clashes. As mentioned in this chapter, partible inheritance in Eastern Zhou China continually overproduced aristocrats. Even if the aristocrats suffered the high casualties that Kiser and Cai claim, under partible inheritance they would have been easily replaced by their descendants. Rather, as the analysis in this section has shown, during the feudal crisis many members of the aristocracy, often one entire lineage after another, were wiped out, not by interstate conflicts but by intrastate strife. See Du (1990, pp. 43–46) for a similar analysis leading to a similar conclusion.

During the Age of Hegemons, most wars (even those between two small states) ultimately arose out of the hegemonic rivalries between Jin and Chu. It was harder for a second-rank or smaller state to attack another small state if doing so went against the will of a hegemon; this was to invite punishment by the hegemon. But with the exacerbation of the feudal crisis, the established hegemons were less interested in and less capable of intervening in other states' affairs, whether internal or foreign. Consequently, second-rank states became more ambitious, and small states started settling scores with one another, greatly increasing the number of small-scale conflicts. These phenomena certainly did not happen overnight following the 546 BCE truce. Intensifying conflicts among Jin's ministers immediately after the death of Duke Dao in 558 BCE gradually ate away at Jin's interstate authority in northern China. As an example of Jin's declining authority, Zhu, having attacked Lu in 557 BCE, attacked Lu again in 556 BCE, even though Jin had arrested Duke Xuan of Zhu at an interstate meeting in 557 BCE for an attack on Lu earlier that year.⁶² Zhu had dared to repeat its offensive, mainly because it had Qi's support.⁶³ And Qi supported Zhu because it judged that internal strife had turned Jin into a paper tiger. My war data show that Qi waged only fifteen wars of aggression between 642 and 558 BCE;⁶⁴ but between 557 and 473 BCE—a period of exactly the same length—it waged thirty-three offensive wars. After 546 BCE, the incidence of one nonhegemonic state attacking another increased further. My war data also show that Lu attacked Zhu five times between 519 and 488 BCE and fought with Ju four times between 541 and 529 BCE; that Song invaded Cao four times after 492 BCE and finally annexed Cao in 487 BCE; and that Zheng and Song made a total of six attacks upon each other between 486 and 480 BCE. These are examples of just the most frequent dyadic conflicts among the nonhegemonic states. Since nonhegemonic states were able to battle only their close neighbors, an increase in wars of this nature lowered the overall war distance after 546 BCE (a point made briefly in chapter 4, and see also figure 4.4a and b).

Because the feudal crisis was a direct consequence of territorial expansion, in the large states that were deeply plagued by the feudal crisis, territorial greed diminished in the Age of Hegemons. Another aspect of warfare also changed. With the feudal crisis worsening, the number of states being conquered quickly declined.⁶⁵ The total number of states conquered by other states was thirty-nine

62. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 16, 557 BCE and Xiang 17, 556 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1026, 1031).

63. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 17, 556 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1031).

64. Again, 643 BCE marked Duke Huan of Qi's death and the decline of Qi to a second-rank state.

65. This changing goal of warfare, however, does not seem to have lowered the relative importance of territorial warfare during the Age of Transition as compared with the Age of Hegemons (see chapter 8, table 8.1). The reason is this: once freed from hegemonic constraints, many minor states started to seize each other's land, thus increasing the percentages of territorial warfare during the Age of Transition.

in the seventh century BCE,⁶⁶ whereas in the sixth century BCE (when the feudal crisis was far worse) the number of conquered states decreased to twenty.⁶⁷ The trend becomes even more striking in Jin, where the feudal crisis was most serious. Jin is recorded as having conquered a total of seventeen states in the seventh century BCE (before 593 BCE, prior to the worsening of the feudal crisis). Between 592 and 453 BCE (the year of Jin's partition), however, Jin conquered only three states, and in 563 BCE gave one of the territories it conquered (Biyang) to Song.

It was quite common in this period to give away conquered land to other states. That King Goujian of Yue, after eliminating Wu, gave a large part of the conquered territory to Chu, Song, and Lu is well-known. Meanwhile, Goujian assassinated one minister and forced out two others, all of whom had been crucial to Yue's ascendancy to major power status.⁶⁸ Chinese historiography has attributed these outcomes to Goujian's personality—he is generally portrayed as a person who was strong in the face of hardship but never able to share success.⁶⁹ In the light of our discussion, however, we may consider Goujian an astute politician. When Yue conquered Wu in 473 BCE, the feudal crisis was in high gear in northern China and Jin was about to be partitioned by its three surviving aristocratic ministers. Very likely Goujian got rid of his three most capable ministers instead of awarding each of them a feudal domain because he did not want Jin's fate recurring in Yue.

WAR-DRIVEN REVAMPING

During the Age of Hegemons, incessant wars had given rise to a goal-oriented, efficiency-oriented culture, spreading from the military sphere to politics, economics, and philosophy. During the Age of Transition, business and market relations were burgeoning, and in philosophy, a few learned men started reflecting more systematically on topics ranging from social relations to the cosmic order. Since new economic relations and philosophical reflections continued to flourish in the Age of Total War, these topics will be reserved for the next chapter. Here, we shall examine contemporary reforms in government to see how these and wars were closely linked in generating cumulative development.

We do not know precisely when during the Eastern Zhou era the earliest reforms started, but it is clear that most changes in government were the result of circumstances newly arisen from interstate warfare. As discussed in chapter 4, major

66. Quite a number of early conquests were not recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* and *Grand Historian*. Therefore, thirty-nine is an underestimate of the number of states conquered in this period.

67. The number of conquered states indeed declined, but certainly not because fewer states existed at the time. Many small states survived until very late in the Age of Total War.

68. *Grand Historian* ("History of Yue"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1746–47).

69. *Grand Historian* ("History of Yue"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1751–52).

states such as Chu, Jin, and Qin improvised the commandery-county system to manage territories newly acquired through military expansion. War is an expensive business. Having adequate resources and manpower is the first step toward winning a war. It is no wonder that the earliest reforms recorded in the received texts were all related to the problems of warfare. For example, it is recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* (Xi 15, 645 BCE) that Jin was badly defeated in a battle with Qin.⁷⁰ Not only was Duke Hui captured in the battle, but some Jin territories east of the Yellow River also fell to Qin. In response, the Jin government improvised a new land-holding system, which can be seen as the emergence of private ownership of land in Eastern Zhou China. Jin also started to draft warriors from among the country dwellers, a population not previously obliged to join the army (see chapter 2).⁷¹

A clearer though unobtrusive indication that private ownership of land was commencing can be found in a 594 BCE entry in *Zuo's Commentary* (Xuan 15).⁷² In that year, Lu began to base taxation on the amount of land a family cultivated. Four years later, Lu also imposed a war tax on its population after the following development in interstate politics: To oppose Jin, Qi allied with Chu in 594 BCE. Because Qi and Lu were old foes and Lu was located between Qi and Chu, the Qi-Chu alliance impelled Lu to ally itself with Jin and to raise taxes in preparation for an impending war.⁷³ These early maneuvers soon became a trend. *Zuo's Commentary* (Ai 12, 483 BCE) records that Lu further raised taxes that year, responding to military pressure from Qi.⁷⁴ In 408 BCE, facing military pressure from Wei, Qin adopted a taxation system similar to the one Lu had adopted in 594 BCE.⁷⁵

Losing a war, though terrible, often triggers reform efforts. *Zuo's Commentary* (Ding 6, 504 BCE) recounts Chu's serious defeats by Wu, first in a naval battle and then again on land in the same year, raising fears in the people of Chu. The story goes on to tell us that Chu's chief minister, Zixi, actually considered the two

70. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 351–63).

71. The changes were inconspicuously recorded in two short sentences, which can be translated as “Jin created the *yuan* field” and “Jin created the *zhou* troops.” The brevity of the records has led to centuries of debate over the meaning of *yuan* and *zhou* (Gao 1956; Li and Li 1999, pp. 69–70; Yang 1983; Yang 1998, p. 157). Still, because of these sentences' context, historians all agree that the records refer to some kind of changes in the landholding and warrior recruiting systems for the purpose of extracting more resources and manpower for war. Moreover, based on the uses of *yuan* and *zhou* in other contexts, a majority of historians also take the two short sentences to mean that the state now allowed people to possess a piece of land permanently (during the Western Zhou period, land was publicly owned and redistributed from time to time), and started to draft warriors from among the country dwellers (Lewis 1990, pp. 57–58; Yang 1998, p. 157; Xu 1983).

72. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 758).

73. *Zuo's Commentary* (Cheng 1, 590 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 783–84).

74. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1670–73). In that year, Wu and Lu had just won a battle against Qi. Fearing a retributive attack from Qi, Lu strengthened its defense system and implemented a new taxation system based on the amount of land a family owned.

75. *Grand Historian* (“Chronologies of the Six States”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 708). After a serious defeat by Jin in 627 BCE, Qin gradually turned its geopolitical attention away from central China and was only motivated to re-engage in politics and warfare in central China by Wei's westward expansion at the end of the fifth century BCE (chapters 6, 8). Thus war-driven reforms were imposed later in Qin than in the other states.

defeats to be boons, because they evoked a favorable reaction to his administrative reforms and his suggestion to relocate the capital to a safer place.⁷⁶

Not all the changes at the time were reactions to immediate military pressure. States sometimes took preemptive measures for strategic reasons. The rise to power of each hegemon had always been preceded by substantial reforms. Qi's rise to hegemonic status about the mid-seventh century BCE had much to do with the reform measures implemented earlier by Guan Zhong (see chapter 3). Jin's rise to power was closely related to the changes carried out by Duke Wen and his followers, especially Zhao Dun.⁷⁷ Even the rise of Yue in the early fifth century BCE was made possible by various measures implemented by Yue ministers Wen Zhong, Fan Li, and Ji Ran.⁷⁸

Since reforms during the Eastern Zhou period were related to a state's military needs, states facing stronger military pressure tended to undertake more drastic measures. Located between Jin and Chu, Zheng was in a problematic geopolitical position. Therefore instrumental culture developed quickly in Zheng and produced the legendary figure Zichan, arguably the most influential reformer of his time. Zichan initiated many changes during his lifetime, but his most remarkable act was placing a caldron inscribed with Zheng's legal codes in a public place in 536 BCE. We know nothing about the content of these legal codes. Yet judging from the expostulation directed at Zichan, the action, or even its content, must have been sensational at the time. It is recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* that Shuxiang, a Jin minister and personal friend of Zichan, wrote a letter to Zichan expressing his indignation. Shuxiang's letter as it appears in *Zuo's Commentary* is rather long, but the core of his objection is expressed in the lines:

When people know the law, authorities will no longer be respected and the inclination toward litigation will grow ever stronger. . . . [Law] will allow people to understand where their interests and conflicts lie. People will thus base their actions only on the legal codes and disregard morality and decorum. People will also dispute obdurately, resting their argument on the most quibbling distinctions in the language of law. Legal cases will increase daily, and bribery will become the norm.

Zichan, of course, rejected Shuxiang's criticism. In his letter of reply he wrote, "I do not have the ability to follow what you have suggested and do not have the

76. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1557–58).

77. *Zuo's Commentary* (Wen 6, 621 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 544–46) records that Zhao Dun, after being promoted to the position of chief minister, reformed the state's legal system, encouraged the use of contracts and various bookkeeping practices in economic activities, and strengthened the state bureaucracy by implementing a better-defined ranking system, restoring many defunct official titles and appointing officials based on merit.

78. Yue's reform measures generally fell under the following three categories: selecting officials based on merit, promoting policies that encouraged the bearing of children and population growth, and promoting agricultural production and trade (*Grand Historian*, "History of Yue"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1742, and "The Economic History"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3256).

time and energy to think of posterity. I have only the capacity to use law to deal with current problems. But even though I am unable to follow your teaching, I greatly appreciate your kindness.”

It was unlikely that Shuxiang, a statesman himself, objected to the use of law or legal measures per se. In 528 BCE, Shuxiang was asked by Han Xuanzi, Jin's chief minister, to adjudicate a murder case⁷⁹ that had started with a land dispute between Xinghou and Yongzi (two Jin aristocrats). The judge in the land dispute, Shuyu, the son-in-law of Yongzi and brother of Shuxiang, unfairly decided the case in Yongzi's favor, whereupon an enraged Xinghou assassinated both Yongzi and Shuyu. Han Xuanzi then asked Shuxiang to judge what was now a murder case. *Zuo's Commentary* records that Shuxiang sentenced Xinghou to death and displayed the corpses of Yongzi and Shuyu in the marketplace for their wrongdoings. Shuxiang's verdicts were based on the ancient legal codes. Obviously, what concerned Shuxiang was that by giving the populace equal access to the laws, Zichan's reforms would encourage people to look for loopholes in the legal codes and to act based on the legal code rather than on moral principles, thereby elevating instrumental rationalism to unprecedented heights and further undermining the already declining Zhou moral and social order. Shuxiang's concern is an unequivocal testimony to the spread of efficiency-oriented culture during the Age of Transition. Although Zichan brushed off Shuxiang's objection, Shuxiang's concerns reflected a point of view that continued to dominate in China. The Zichan-Shuxiang debate predated the Legalist-Moralist controversy in the Age of Total War and experienced renewed incarnations throughout Chinese history.⁸⁰

The reforms that preceded the Age of Total War reached into almost every sphere of sociopolitical life, including the taxation and land-tenure systems, the legal system, military organization, and economic policy. But in comparison with reforms to come during the Age of Total War, these were far less systematic—often improvised to deal with specific problems of the time. Nevertheless, they were crucial, not only because they undermined the old Western Zhou sociopolitical order and strengthened the power of the ducal states, but also because they created institutions and experiences that would be applied to later reforms.

THE RISE OF BUREAUCRATIC STATES

Whereas the feudal crisis was to a great extent the inevitable product of the Zhou feudal arrangement, the rise of the Legalist reforms was a political act of the Three

79. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 14; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1366–67).

80. It must be added that codification of law had been proceeding throughout the Age of Hegemons. Jin law was codified in 668 BCE by Jin minister Shiwei; in 633 BCE, by Duke Wen; in 621 BCE, by Zhao Dun; in 593 BCE, by Fan Wuzi, and in the mid-sixth century by Fan Xuanzi. By 513 BCE (*Zuo's Commentary*, Zhao 29; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1504), twenty-three years after Zheng published the legal codes in a public place, Jin also cast a cauldron on which it publicized its legal codes in a public place.

Jin states (Wei, Han, and Zhao). It was compelled by the circumstances of the feudal crisis, but it had an impact that the Three Jin aristocratic lineages had never intended. The three new Jin states faced two immediate challenges. First, having benefited from the feudal crisis, the rulers of these new states were well aware of what could happen when the power of aristocratic ministers grew too strong. Even before they divided Jin, the Three Jins had already made nonhereditary merit appointments of county ministers⁸¹ and had reformed the land-tenure system, tax policy, and the legal system.⁸² In their own state politics, they naturally wanted to avoid the root problems that had caused Jin's feudal crisis in the first place. Second, as independent states, the Three Jins' geopolitical situation was unfavorable. Whereas an intact Jin had enjoyed almost complete dominance in the north, after the partition, Wei, Zhao and Han all faced potential enemies in all directions. In addition, the territory of each of new state had developed out of its ruler's original fiefs, and thus was not contiguous. Wei was separated by Han into eastern and western sections connected only by a narrow corridor in the north Shangdang region. Pieces of Wei's territory were even located inside the other states, especially Zhao.⁸³ This made the territory of the Three Jin states difficult to defend. To address these challenges, all three initiated internal reforms and external military expansion: Zhao to the north, Han to the south, and Wei to the West.

Perhaps because its geopolitical position was the least favorable, Wei was the first to launch a series of thorough changes in government following a set of doctrines later known as Legalism. Duke Wen of Wei (r. 445–396 BCE) appointed several highly capable officials, including Li Kui, Zhai Huang, Yue Yang, Wu Qi, and Ximen Bao, to advance the changes. Li Kui was the mastermind. He was Duke Wen's chief minister, and is regarded by Chinese historians as China's first Legalist philosopher. The many measures he implemented can be briefly summarized under four rubrics.⁸⁴ First, he established a full-fledged bureaucracy. More and more officials were selected based on ability, and promoted or demoted based on performance. Written records of an official's performance were now kept, regularly reported to higher authorities, and evaluated. Their privileges and titles were not inheritable. Second, Li established

81. The county ministers for the ten counties established after the elimination of the Qi and Yangshe lineages in 514 BCE were all selected based on ability (*Zuo's Commentary*, Zhao 28, 514 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1493–96). During the early to middle Age of Hegemons, most counties in Jin had become inheritable properties of the county ministers (see chapter 4). By the Age of Transition, however, I see no records showing that the sons of Jin's county ministers inherited their fathers' positions in the counties controlled by the six ministers. See also Zheng (2002) for a similar discussion.

82. All six Jin ministers also reformed the land taxation system in their own domains at about the same time (Li and Li 1999, pp. 264–68).

83. For example, after conquering Zhongshan Wei possessed a huge territory in the middle of Zhao's domain. Up to the mid-fourth century BCE, Wei, Han, and Zhao were still exchanging territories in order to create states that could be controlled and defended more easily (Liu 1988, p. 64; Yang 1998, pp. 279–80).

84. The following discussion of Li Kui's reform measures is based on Peng (2000, pp. 95–117); Xu, Si, and Yang (1995, pp. 1174–77); and Yang (1998, pp. 188–92).

a more comprehensive penal law system. The published penal code attributed to Li Kui had six detailed chapters, on banditry, robbery, gambling, and other activities that were seen by the rulers as disruptive to public order and ethics. Also included were detailed procedures to be followed during arrests and judgments. Although Li Kui's legal codes are not extant today, we know that they were the basis of the later *Qin Law* and *Han Law*, which gives us a sense of their paradigmatic status. Third, agricultural production was promoted. Farmers were required to grow several grains to minimize the damage in the event of a blight on one of them, to grow vegetables and fruit trees in the interstices of grain plantings, and to make the cultivating and harvesting of the crops their first priority. Li Kui also allocated government funds to buy grains in years of good harvests and sell them in bad years. The measure protected the interests of agricultural producers, whom Li Kui saw as vital for the strength of a state. Fourth, he strengthened the army, making military service mandatory for all adult males, and rewarding and promoting warriors based on their military skill and courage. In short, Li Kui's measures were aimed at establishing a strong bureaucratic state that was effectively controlling its population, maximizing agricultural production, and optimizing its army.

Strengthened by these measures, Wei began its military expansion. Naturally, Wei's ascendancy posed a threat to its neighboring states, which felt compelled to undertake their own reforms. These reforms not only strengthened a state, they also freed it from the feudal constraints that had plagued it for years during the Age of Transition. And rather than acquiring hegemonic status, increasing territory became the goal. These transformations increased the scale and changed the purposes of warfare; they also altered the nature of the interstate war network and the relationships among the states involved. A new kind of warfare—total war—emerged. The reform-warfare synergy in conjunction with wars for territory would become the engine of history and pave the way for China's unification. A new chapter in China's history begins—the Age of Total War.

SUMMARY

Secondary feudalization, developed during the Age of Hegemons, strengthened the power of aristocratic ministers at the expense of ducal houses, triggering a general crisis in the feudal order and the collapse of a hegemonic system of interstate relations that had formed after the collapse of the Western Zhou dynasty. The pivot point in this historical process was the 546 BCE truce agreement between Jin and Chu, which also included many other smaller states. Following the truce agreement, Wu attempted to achieve a hegemonic status defining interstate relationships, as Chu and Jin had done in the past. But despite defeating Chu in several major battles, Wu remained limited by its unfavorable geopolitical situation. Having overextended itself militarily, Wu quickly met its demise, a collapse

that signified the end of the hegemonic system of interstate relations that had existed for over two hundred years.

Eastern Zhou politics after the 546 BCE truce agreement entered the Age of Transition, characterized by the worsening of the feudal crisis and eventually the development of bureaucratic states empowered by Legalist doctrines. In this Age of Transition the most historically significant event was the metamorphosis of Jin. The 546 BCE truce agreement, having removed the major external threat to Jin, allowed Jin's six most powerful aristocratic lineages to turn their attention to domestic power struggles. Large-scale civil wars soon broke out among the six lineages, wiping out three of them. In 453 BCE the surviving three divided Jin into three new states. Compelled by historical circumstances, Wei (one of the Three Jins) turned itself into a full-fledged bureaucratic state (among other major reforms), which not only eliminated the possibility of a recurrence of the feudal crisis but also greatly strengthened its military capacity. These transformations made Wei the strongest state at the time (see chapter 8).

The collapse of the hegemonic interstate system changed the nature of warfare. During the Age of Transition, far fewer states were conquered, because the larger states, plagued by the feudal crisis, had less capacity for territorial expansion. Once the larger states were no longer able to maintain the interstate political order, skirmishes among minor states became a commonplace.

Finally, the efficiency-oriented rational culture and cumulative development that had begun in the Age of Hegemons surged during the Age of Transition. Politically, the state's administration and taxation capabilities greatly increased as bureaucracy and meritocracy became the norm. Economically, private ownership of land came into being, and market relations burgeoned. In the cultural and ideological spheres, private education was established, and learned men started to voice their concerns and to propose solutions to society's problems, leading to the flourishing of ancient Chinese philosophies. These new developments are the foci of the next two chapters.

In the Age of Total War (419–221 BCE): Philosophies and Philosophers

The years from the partitioning of Jin in 453 BCE to the beginning of the Age of Total War in 419 BCE were relatively quiet militarily. The available records show a total of only ten military encounters during that period. Except for Qin attacking and occupying a city belonging to Chu, the rest were all small-scale battles between a major and a minor state. Beneath the calm, though, storms were imminent. Wei had carried out far-reaching changes in government that greatly enhanced its ability to control and tax the population. These changes, moreover, turned Wei's government (followed by many other states) into a powerful bureaucratic state, and the feudal crisis, which had greatly dampened the territorial ambitions of the hegemonies, came to an end. New conditions enabled the states to wage a new kind of warfare—"total war," so labeled because wars now lasted much longer and often tied up a larger proportion of a state's adult male population and material resources. Total war also differed from traditional warfare in its aim, which was no longer hegemonic dominance but territorial expansion. Furthermore, since a high enemy body count weakened not only the enemy's morale, but also its army, existing and potential, it became a major goal of warfare to wipe out the opponent's entire army. Consequently, soldiers were massively being killed on the battlefield and slaughtered after surrendering. I identify 419 BCE as the beginning of the Age of Total War because in that year, Wei, with a greatly strengthened military, fortified the city of Shaoliang, located west of the Yellow River and within Qin's sphere of control. This immediately provoked Qin to retaliate, which then induced increasingly intensive military confrontations among the major powers. Since the onset of total war had much to do with the inauguration of the Legalist reforms, to understand the Age of Total War, we must start with the context that led to the emergence of Chinese philosophies and the ascendance of Legalism in the sphere of politics.

THE RISE OF *SHI*

During the Age of Transition there gradually emerged a new group of men who were identified as *shi* by themselves and others. *Shi* was originally the lowest

aristocratic title,¹ denoting those who were both “warriors and advisers,” the two facets of the training of a typical Zhou nobleman.² By the Age of Total War, *shi* had gradually come to refer to men who could earn their living not by farming or commerce but by their ability to be of service to the state or its leading men.³ Men of this kind were mostly of a low inherited social rank and political status, but they constituted a pool from which came philosophers, government personnel, army commanders, and bureaucrats during the Age of Total War.⁴

Though not all the *shi* were well educated, during the Age of Total War, most of those who regarded themselves as *shi*, especially the famous ones, had been trained in or had taught themselves the skills they needed to move up in life. The ascent of *shi* during the Eastern Zhou period resulted from several major social changes that had taken place: first, the practice of partible inheritance had produced an overly large population of lower-ranking aristocrats. In the later years of the Age of Transition, few of these lower-ranking aristocrats were rich; many had even failed to inherit aristocratic titles and lived as commoners. Moreover, the class boundaries between lower-ranking aristocrats and commoners blurred as more of the former started earning their living based on their skills. Second, in about the sixth century BCE, the education system that had been institutionalized during the Western Zhou period collapsed in Jin, Qi, and many central-northern states. This collapse may have been related to the increasing population of city dwellers (many of whom were lower-ranking aristocrats or originally from aristocratic families), who had the right to receive the education offered by the state. The increase in their numbers had coincided with the collapse of state power resulting from the feudal crisis, which undoubtedly contributed to the collapse of public education.⁵ Third, the above two historical processes overlapped with the rise of bureaucracy and meritocratic principles in the selection and promotion of officials, which created a demand for talent just when the public education system was collapsing, and also greatly inspired people of humble social origins to seek higher social status by virtue of their skills.⁶ The above three historical processes provided opportunities for educated people to offer private education and for the gifted to achieve better lives by dint of the knowledge and expertise

1. Pines (2009, p. 117).

2. A *shi* during the Western Zhou period was expected to acquire the following six skills: rites, music, writing, arithmetic, archery, and chariot driving. See also Schwartz (1985, p. 58).

3. See Z. Liu (2004) for a discussion of huge differences in occupations, social status, and education levels among the members of the *shi* group during the Warring States period.

4. Pines (2002).

5. Fung (1996, pp. 34–43).

6. One piece of evidence for both trends is that kings and princes during the Age of Total War often tried to attract large numbers of men of different talents to live under their patronage, as a showing of hospitality, and perhaps more importantly as an available think tank and talent pool for the rulers to choose from. During the Age of Total War a powerful patron might employ as many as several thousand such men. These patrons included Prince Xinling of Wei, Prince Mengchang of Qi, Prince Pingyuan of Zhao, and Prince Chunshen of Chu.

acquired from schooling or other channels. The beginning of private education was crucial to the rise of *shi* in society.

It is difficult to ascertain precisely when private education started in China, but we do know that Confucius (551–479 BCE) was the first person to have offered private education on an impressive scale. For this, he has been credited as China's first private educator.⁷ Because of Confucius's unsurpassable status in Chinese history, his life and works and the lives and works of his followers were much better recorded than those of other ancient Chinese philosophers. Therefore the analysis in the following sections, instead of a general introduction to the topic, will focus exclusively on the family backgrounds, careers, and lives of Confucius and his disciples. This will, I hope, give readers an understanding of the nature of private education at the time of its inception and of the historical background of its advance.⁸

Confucius's ancestors belonged to a prominent aristocratic family of the state of Song, but his great-grandfather had fled to Lu after taking part in a struggle among several Song aristocratic families.⁹ Confucius's father, a low-ranking military officer in Lu, died when Confucius was only three. Confucius and his mother were poor, and in his youth, Confucius earned his living as a musician and accountant, as well as by doing other insignificant jobs. We do not know precisely when Confucius began his teaching career, but it must have been quite early in his life, because in 522 BCE, when he was twenty-nine years old, Confucius stopped his disciple Qin Zhang from attending the funeral of a person that he considered unworthy (according to *Zuo's Commentary*; Zhao 20, 522 BCE).¹⁰ In his early fifties, Confucius held two government posts, but offering private education was what occupied most of his time and energy.¹¹ In the course

7. Fung (1996, pp. 34–43).

8. *Grand Historian* contains not only a biography of Confucius himself, but also a chapter on his pupils. Confucius never wrote any philosophical treatise himself. *Analects* (Lunyu), a collection of Confucius's sayings and dialogues with his disciples and peers, which appear to have been passed down by his disciples and compiled after Confucius's death, also contains information on the lives and careers of those disciples. In addition, some texts compiled by Western Han dynasty thinkers, such as *Gardens of Sayings* (*Shuoyuan*; reproduced in Liu 1925) and *Han Ying's Illustration of the Didactic Application of the Book of Odes* (*Hanshi Waizhuan*; reproduced by Shanghai Shangwu Yinshuguan in 1925), also include accounts of Confucius and his disciples. The data for the following analysis of the lives of Confucius and his disciples, unless otherwise specified, are mainly based on the accounts in *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Confucius," pp. 1905–48; "Biographies of Confucius' Disciples," pp. 2185–226, reproduced in Pei, Sima and Zhang 1959), and in *Analects* (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980).

9. This widely accepted account, however, has been challenged by Eno (2003), who quite convincingly asserts that Confucius had ancestors from the state of Zhu and analyzes how his family background had shaped Confucius's thinking.

10. *Zuo's Commentary* (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1413).

11. It is known that Confucius had once held a *sikou* post. Chinese historians interpreted this as a ministry-level post equivalent to the modern-day Minister of Justice. But the term *sikou* can mean anything from local prison guard to Minister of Justice, and the historical account does not make it possible to differentiate. In any case Confucius's post must have carried a certain amount of authority, because it is recorded in the received texts that Confucius tried to implement policies aimed at strengthening the ducal house vis-à-vis the Lu high aristocracy (i.e., the Three Huans). The attempt failed, and Confucius was forced to leave Lu, thus beginning his fourteen-year exile. He was not able to return home until he was sixty-nine years old.

of his life Confucius had accepted many disciples and may have had over seventy close followers.

Twenty-nine of these followers are mentioned in *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Confucius' Disciples"), in differing degrees of detail. These are the disciples whose lives and careers appear most frequently in the received texts, and I therefore focus on them exclusively.¹² The twenty-nine hailed from the following states: Lu (20), Wey (3), Qi (2), Wu (1), Song (1), and Chen (1); the home state of one disciple remains unknown. Most were Lu natives, but many other states were also represented.¹³ Only one (Sima Niu) probably came from Song high aristocracy,¹⁴ the rest were lower aristocrats or commoners. In fact, some of Confucius's most important pupils, such as Ran Yong, Ran Qiu, Zilu, Zixia, Zigong, and Zizhang, are clearly mentioned in the received sources as coming from poor families,¹⁵ and fourteen of the twenty-nine better-known disciples are specifically said to have had impoverished childhoods.¹⁶

The future lives and occupations of Confucius's disciples reflect his teaching, as well as the nature of private education and society at the time. Eleven of the twenty-nine closest followers (38 percent) took official positions; four were teachers;¹⁷ one was a merchant/diplomat; one, a diviner; one, a ritual master; and four were unemployed. We have no clear information about the remaining seven.¹⁸ If the pattern was similar for the rest of his followers, we can conclude that most of Confucius's close disciples went on to have careers as government officials. This is a sign not only of what Confucius taught his disciples,¹⁹ but also of the

12. I also see no correlation between Confucius's closeness with certain disciples and the disciples' family backgrounds and later successes.

13. Some of Confucius's close followers came from as far away as Qin (3) and Chu (2) (T. Li 1999).

14. *Zuo's Commentary* (Ai 14, 481 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1688) records that Sima Niu left Song in order to steer clear of his brother's plot against Duke Jing of Song (r. 516–469 BCE). Most historians think that this Sima Niu was Confucius's disciple, but Yang (1990, p. 1688) argues that this Sima Niu was a namesake of Confucius's disciple. If Yang is correct, then none of the twenty-nine disciples was of high birth, although two of his other close followers, Meng Yizi and Nangong Jingshu, came from the aristocracy.

15. For example, *Xunzi* ("Dalue 27"; reproduced in Wang 1988, pp. 485–519) mentions that both Zigong and Jilu (Zilu), who were among Confucius's most important disciples, originated as country dwellers but became famous for their learning.

16. To give just two examples: Min Ziqian is said to have lived away from home when he was young and worked as a carriage driver with his father to earn their living. Zeng Shen is said to have cultivated melon patches and his mother to have woven cloth. For a discussion of the poor family backgrounds of Confucius's other disciples, see Hsiao (1979, pp. 82–83).

17. Among the four individuals to whom I have assigned teaching careers, Youruo's career is somewhat unclear. But because Confucius's disciples selected him as their new master after Confucius's death, and because he may have been crucial to compilation and organization of the *Analects*, this author places him in this category.

18. Of the seven individuals whose careers are unknown to us, one (Gongbo Liao) is mentioned in the *Grand Historian* as having maligned Confucius in the hearing of Jisun, the head of the most powerful lineage in Lu, and it was this that compelled Confucius to go into exile. In other words, Gongbo Liao might have held an official position in Lu.

19. Ethics, speech, government, and literature were the four main subjects in Confucius's teaching. See *Analects* ("Xianjin 11"; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, pp. 2458–501) for Confucius's comments on the disciples who excelled in these subjects. In addition, since one of his disciples became a diviner and excelled in the *Book of Changes*, Confucius might have also offered instruction in divination and *Changes*.

importance of merit in official recruitment during Confucius's lifetime. As for the kinds of official positions held by Confucius's followers, we find that most of them were hired as ministers to powerful aristocratic lineages or as ministers in charge of cities controlled by high aristocratic lineages.²⁰ In the previous chapter we discussed the Three Jin aristocratic lineages' implementation of a bureaucratic form of government in the domains under their control in the sixth century BCE. The employment pattern among Confucius's disciples shows that what took place in Jin took place also in Lu.²¹

In *Ancient China in Transition*, Hsu asserts that private teaching had emerged "to meet the demand for training the new administrative experts and strategists," and that the private teaching offered by Confucius "opened up a new and lasting path by which any low-born but able young man could gain high office by his own competence."²² These and a few other similar arguments by Hsu have been severely criticized by Mark Lewis:

Almost every proposition in this [Hsu's] argument is wrong. The schools were not created to train administrators for the state. As we saw above they were all ideologically in opposition to the state as it was then constituted. Their education programs were devoted to skills that were of no use for administrators. . . . Certain individuals, such as Shang Yang, Fan Sui, Cai Ze, and Li Si studied in their youth and then acceded directly to high office through attracting the attention of a ruler. . . . However, these were obviously exceptional cases distinct from the careers of most schoolmen.²³

I can agree with Lewis only to a degree. Indeed, private education at the time could not have been invented overnight by non-state actors such as Confucius for the sole purpose of training state administrators. Private education as an institution must have begun gradually and existed interstitially for a time, during which its social and political roles had not yet crystallized. On the other hand, given the evidence that 38 percent of Confucius's closest disciples took official positions, we have to conclude that official careers were not "exceptional cases distinct from the careers of most schoolmen," as Lewis claims. We must distinguish between the purposes of those who offered private education and the jobs that their students took after obtaining that education. Let me illustrate this point using a modern-day example. Social sciences and humanities disciplines in today's Chinese or American universities are not mainly aimed at training government

20. For example, Zilu was a minister of Kong Li's family in Wey, and Ran Yong and Ran Qiu were both ministers of the Ji lineage in Lu. Also, Ran Geng, Zai Yu, Ziyou, Zixia, and Zeng Shen were all hired as ministers to govern the cities under the control of aristocratic lineages.

21. The received texts indicate very clearly that Confucius's disciples were mostly compensated in kind (cereals) for their services. This was another step in the development of Chinese bureaucracy.

22. Hsu (1965, pp. 100–103).

23. Lewis (1999b, p. 74).

officials, and many social science and humanities subjects taught in Chinese universities are also not congenial to the state ideology. Nevertheless, graduates with degrees in the social sciences and humanities disciplines often go on to become government administrators and officials in both countries. In the Age of Total War, for instance, although there is no doubt that the so-called Jixia Academy in Qi was simply an institution for dispensing royal patronage, not created for training state officials,²⁴ it is equally certain that the Jixia patronage community was a crucial talent pool for Qi.²⁵

Four of Confucius's followers chose teaching as their career. Another three, while serving as local officials, also taught.²⁶ Apparently, teaching was an attractive career choice at the time, underscoring a social context that led to the boom in private education and philosophy during the Age of Total War.²⁷ One of the disciples (Zigong) became very rich as a merchant and was also a successful diplomat. His diplomatic style, as recorded in the received texts,²⁸ was so much like that of the later strategist-persuaders that he could have been a forerunner of that profession.

For the four disciples called "unemployed," it seems that lack of job opportunities had nothing to do with their jobless status. It is recorded that Yan Hui died very young and Yuan Xian refused to take any official posts out of profound skepticism that politics could be an instrument for the good. Min Ziqian and Gongxi Ai also rejected official posts offered by powerful aristocrats, because they thought that by taking the posts they would, against their own wishes, undermine the power of the ducal house.²⁹ In short, even though private tutelage was very new in Confucius's time, it was already a good channel of upward mobility for men of lower social status. Consequently, private education expanded quickly, as more and more men tried to improve their lives through learning rather than remaining bound by their social status. This phenomenon partly accounts for the growth and advancement of the *shi*, something that further undermined the feudal order and facilitated the development of an instrumental culture.

24. Sivin (1995). See also Meyer (2010–2011) for a critical reassessment of Sivin's argument.

25. Chapter 8 contains a more detailed account of the role that the Jixia Academy played in Qi politics, and of the wealth and prestige that the famous "Jixia scholars" enjoyed.

26. One of the three, Zixia, forty-four years younger than Confucius, became a famous teacher in Wei. Several of the most renowned Legalists in Wei, such as Duke Wen, Li Kui, and Wu Qi, received training from him (Xu 2002, pp. 332–36).

27. It is said that Confucius's disciples split into eight different schools after his death. The seven disciples who took teaching careers were the initiators of some of the most important schools.

28. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Confucius' Disciples"; reproduced in Pei, Sima and Zhang 1959, pp. 2198–201).

29. A major concern of Confucius was the decline of ducal power and the rise of the aristocratic families as a result of the feudal crisis. It seems probable that Confucius's teachings and practices influenced at least some of his followers. Confucius comes across in the received texts as a very reasonable man, however. He praised the disciples who refused to take official positions with Lu's aristocratic families, but he maintained good relationships with those who did.

The *shi* also created new social relationships. Before they appeared on the scene, authority relations in ancient China had been kinship based, but now members of the *shi* group and the aristocrats or rulers who employed them related as clients and patrons. The *shi* were rewarded by the patrons who employed them and were free to leave their patrons at will.³⁰ They seem to have enjoyed great respect and freedom of movement during the Age of Total War. Their freedom, however, must not be understood as “freedom of expression” in the modern sense.³¹ First, the rudimentary “freedom of expression” that *shi* enjoyed derived from the longstanding weak state tradition of the Eastern Zhou period before the Age of Total War (chapter 4). Second, the kind of freedom of expression that the *shi* group exercised, whether in written treatises expressing their views or in oral disquisitions meant to attract the favorable attention of rulers, was a completely new phenomenon. *Shi* had so recently appeared that their role in society and relationships with rulers had not yet crystallized into what they would become during the Han dynasty.³² Third, neither the techniques nor the very idea of limiting the *shi*’s freedom of expression had yet come into being. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, during the Age of Total War, all the major states were trying to attract clever men and effective problem solvers to their side. The Western Han courtier Dongfang Shuo (154–93 BCE) famously commented, “A state strengthens with the support of *shi*, and meets its demise when it loses *shi*’s support.” The remark is likely exaggerated for rhetorical effect; nevertheless it expresses the importance of *shi* to their patrons during the Age of Total War.³³ In *Guanzi*, it is written that “those who want to compete in the world under Heaven must first compete for the [talented] people.”³⁴ During the Age of Total War, many rulers treated talented *shi* with the highest esteem and courtesy, even those who openly expressed views at odds with or even embarrassing to the rulers. And interstate competition for *shi* also created an environment in which members of the *shi* group could easily improve their status.

Nevertheless, neither the freedom nor the rising status of *shi* should be overstated. The *shi* group did not participate in politics as an actor with an autonomous power base and distinctive interests, as did the bourgeoisie in late medieval Europe; they could only participate in politics as individuals whom

30. Most officials were paid in kind at the time. Even Confucius wanted to pay Yuan Xian 900 *hu* (=180 *shi*) of grain per annum for acting as his family manager.

31. Hui (2005, p. 168).

32. Yu (2000, p. 2) sees the crystallization of the relationship between the rulers and *shi* as the “institutionalization of *shi*” in Chinese politics.

33. See *Dongfang Shuo’s Responses to Difficult Questions Raised by an Interlocutor* (Dongfang Shuo *da ke nan*). The Eastern Han philosopher Wang Chong (27–ca. 97), mused on the role of *shi* during the Age of Total War: “During the Warring States era, Chu would become powerful if talent entered Chu, Qi would be weakened if talent left Qi, Zhao would be saved when talent helped Zhao, and Wei would be hurt if talent turned hostile to Wei.” [*Fair Discussions* (“Xiaoli”; reproduced in Wang 1990, p. 808)].

34. *Guanzi* (“Bayan 23”; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990, p. 351).

their respective rulers had come to trust and even rely on. Therefore although some *shi*, such as Li Kui, Shang Yang, Wu Qi, Su Qin, Zhang Yi, and Li Si, enjoyed vast power and prestige when they had the ear of their ruler-patrons, their counsel during the Age of Total War greatly extended state power without being able to counterbalance it. After China was unified, the *shi* as a group would soon lose much of the freedom they had to that point enjoyed.³⁵

THE ORIGINS OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHIES

During the fifth century BCE, ancient Chinese society was undergoing several major transformations triggered by the general and lasting feudal crisis that had crested in the century before. Politically, ducal power was collapsing as state governments were increasingly commandeered by powerful aristocratic lineages. Staffing by merit and governing by bureaucracy were now common government practices. The aristocracy that had so far dominated China was declining. Societally, the rituals and norms devised during the Western Zhou era no longer functioned well as the moral basis of society. Warfare increased in scale, ferocity, and brutality. China in the fifth century BCE in a way resembled nineteenth-century Europe: the old sociopolitical order was collapsing, but new ones had not yet been installed, nor had the rapid and wholesale social changes been comprehended. It must have been a time of deep frustration for learned and profound thinkers such as Confucius. Beginning in the later part of the Age of Transition, with the development of private education and a more rationalistic culture, learned people began formulating systematic conceptions of the chaotic age in which they lived, and trying to devise remedies for new social developments that they saw as problematic. Education, rationalism, a proclivity for systematic thinking, and the conviction that all problems might have solutions—all these coalesced into philosophies, the most important of which were later called “schools [of thought],” known as Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, Mohism, Yin-yang cosmology, and so on.³⁶

35. The Qin legal documents unearthed at Shuihudi contain a Qin decree stating that *shi* who came to Qin must obtain residential permits and would be punished for inflicting any physical hurt on Qin residents. This indicates that Qin had placed restrictions on certain *shi* activities even before its conquest of China (Jiang 1986, p. 16). The *shi* flourished again during the early Western Han period. But once imperial Confucianism had become state doctrine and policy during the Western Han period, the *shi* as a group became partly Confucianized and tamed to imperial will (Yu 2000, chap. 5).

36. Mohism has ten key tenets: meritocracy, the upholding of unified moral principles, impartial love, anti-aggression, frugality, thrift in funerals, rejection of music, rejection of fatalism, respect for heaven, and the serving of ghosts. A good adviser should ask the ruler to use different doctrines depending on the circumstances: if the state is in disorder, then he should expound meritocracy and unified moral principles; if the state is poor, then he should expound frugality and thrift in funerals; if the state overindulges in musical entertainment, then he should expound rejecting music; if the state is dissolute and indecorous, he should expound respecting heaven and serving ghosts; if the state is devoted to aggression and intimidation, then he should expound impartial love and anti-aggression. Mohists might have lived together under tightly controlled organizations. Members of the organization dressed very simply and worked hard. One would be severely punished for violating the rules of the

Recent studies point out that, although the major elements of these schools of thought can be found in pre-Han sources,³⁷ the so-called schools as we know them were largely reconstructed by the scholar-officials of the Eastern Han and post-Eastern Han eras to generate authoritative interpretations of ancient Chinese philosophies and genealogies of their major figures.³⁸ The Eastern Zhou thinkers, however, saw themselves and one another quite differently from the later interpreters.³⁹ Moreover, the pre-Han and early Western Han thinkers were mostly highly eclectic, although they shared many common assumptions.⁴⁰ Recent scholarship sees the development of ancient Chinese philosophies as a highly competitive and diffuse process, and the Eastern Han and post-Eastern Han canonization of the schools and the philosophers as a slow and conflict-ridden development.⁴¹

The pluralistic and competitive emergence of ancient Chinese philosophies and their later collation and canonization can both be better understood if we recall the discussion of the nature of ideological power in chapter 1. In its ideal-typical form, ideological power is noncoercive. Ideologies also develop based in part on localized and personal experiences and are therefore intrinsically pluralistic. If an ideology is allowed to evolve without political intervention, it will naturally develop numerous variations, arising from its advocates' varying personal experiences and agendas (my analysis of the potent development of Chinese popular religion in chapter 12 exemplifies this point).⁴² Yet, although very few ancient ideologies were originally tailor-made for the state, certain ideologies could be such important political tools that they would be adapted to fit the agendas of the state actors. It is always through this kind of political process

organization. Mohism was very influential during the Warring State period, but its influence declined after the Qin conquest, though aspects of it were absorbed by Daoism and Legalism.

The mature form of yin-yang cosmology can be briefly summarized as follows: Yin and Yang are opposite but complementary principles. The constant interactions of the two create dynamic balances and changes that regulate the functioning of the cosmos and the waxing and waning of human realms. During the Age of Total War, the Mandate of Heaven concept and ideas that we today regard as Confucian or Daoist were mixed with yin-yang cosmology. The theory then started to gain political significance, thanks to the writings and activities of Zou Yan, one of the leading thinkers patronized by the rulers of Qi. In imperial China the theory coalesced with the notion of *qi* (natural energy) out of which everything is made and with the five-phases theory (*wuxing*). Thus it turned into a more unified theory of Chinese correlative cosmology. The cosmological theory also had great impact on Chinese medicine, astronomy, agriculture, the calendar, popular religions, and many other areas of knowledge.

37. It must be noted that although quite a few ancient Chinese philosophical treatises have survived, Chinese culture was still in a nascent stage of transformation from an oral to a text-based tradition (Nylan 2000, pp. 243–48).

38. Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan (2003).

39. For example, in *Contra the Twelve Masters* (*Fei shi er zi; Xunzi*, reproduced in Wang 1988), Xunzi (ca. 312–230 BCE) lumped twelve masters into six categories and criticized their arguments one by one, but without naming the school of thought that he was analyzing. Moreover, he criticized Mencius and Zisi, ancient philosophers whom we identify as Confucians, while highly praising Confucius's teaching.

40. Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan (2003); Kern (2000).

41. Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan (2003); Nylan (1999, 2001); Zufferey (2003).

42. One need only recollect how many different forms of Protestantism have developed in the last few centuries.

that the otherwise diffuse and noncoercive ideological power starts to acquire a centralized-coercive character.

This aspect of the development of an ideology poses a challenge for researchers. We tend to take the canonized version of an ideology as a given and to analyze the impact of that version on later historical development. This can lead to insightful analysis of the role of a given ideology in history, but it tends to overlook the pluralistic/diffuse nature of an ideology, especially before it is canonized, and to exaggerate the historical importance of the individuals who contributed to the ideology as it was later canonized under state sponsorship. In short, this kind of analysis tends to produce teleological accounts.

Recent scholars have started to deconstruct the teleological accounts by emphasizing the competitive nature and pluralistic development of ideologies, especially before the intervention of the state (or other centralized-coercive forces). They point out that individuals who have been exalted as the creators of an important ideology or religion were often obscure figures in their own time, and that a given ideology exhibited many and varying tendencies before its collation and canonization. This new research not only highlights the diffuse nature of ideological power, but also refutes many historical myths. There is, though, a weakness in this approach. The historical importance of an ideology or of the individuals considered the begetters of that ideology has less to do with its tenets at the time of its inception and the political/intellectual influence of its creators in their own time, than with the impact of the canonized ideology and canonized figures on *later* history. If deconstruction is carried too far, the importance of a certain ideology and its begetters in later history can be underappreciated.

When touching upon the ideological aspect of social power, my primary focus is on the impact of certain ideologies on later history. For that reason, I have adopted a narrative strategy close to that of traditional scholarship; that is, I focus on the canonized version of an ideology and on the works of a few individuals who were later elevated as that ideology's key thinkers. At the same time, however, I wish to reveal the intellectual environment at the particular historical juncture when that ideology came into being, but not as a naïve teleological narrative. Therefore I shall always introduce, albeit very briefly, the intellectual environment of the time and the historical complexities affecting the development of an ideology before and after its canonization.

With these provisos, let us now turn to Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism,⁴³ the three philosophical traditions that had by far the most significant impact on the history of China. Whereas Confucianism bore a strong imprint of

43. This chapter discusses only Warring States philosophical Daoism, not the religious Daoism that developed a few hundred years later during the Eastern Han dynasty. Although religious Daoism shared a name with philosophical Daoism and regarded Laozi as its supreme deity, it would be a mistake to regard philosophical Daoism as the intellectual foundation of religious Daoism, for they were crucially different (see chapter 10).

the Western Zhou tradition, Daoism, and particularly Legalism were more the products of the war-driven rise of rationality during the Eastern Zhou period. One must understand at the outset that the English words “Daoism” and “Legalism” are inadequate translations of the Chinese terms *daoia* and *fajia*, each of which carried somewhat changing meanings throughout Chinese history.⁴⁴ As for the term “Confucianism,” it was coined by Europeans “search[ing] for an exact counterpart within the Orient to the monumental presence of Christianity in European history,” to translate the Chinese term *rujia* (ru-ism). Originally, however, *rujia* “indicated not a precise moral orientation or body of doctrines, but a professional training with the general goal of state service,”⁴⁵ and the meaning of this term, too, underwent significant changes in Chinese history.⁴⁶ However, because they are widely known and used, I have decided to retain Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism as the translations for the Chinese terms *rujia*, *daoia*, and *fajia*.

Explaining the three most important philosophical traditions of China in a few pages is an impossible task. Each tradition, along with the lives of the masters who have been credited with pioneering them, was reinterpreted time and again throughout China’s history. Even though the following discussion only intends to present some of the core features of the three philosophical traditions that are most relevant to the topoi of this book, oversimplification can hardly be avoided. For readers wanting a more in-depth view of these schools of thought, other sources are available.⁴⁷

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism can be traced back to the teachings of Confucius.⁴⁸ Confucius believed that the Western Zhou political system, which had taken form during the early Western Zhou period and had matured by the mid-Western Zhou period, was the model of a good society.⁴⁹ He also believed that the incessant warfare and feudal crisis that he saw all around him were caused by the growing ambiguities of social relations. Most crucial to Confucius’s thought was the concept *zheng*

44. The names Daoist and Legalist for devotees of these philosophies were not created during the Age of Total War. See K. Smith (2003) for the inception of Daoism during the early Western Han.

45. Both quotes are from Nylan (2001, p. 3).

46. Nylan (1999, pp. 18–19) has insightfully pointed out that up until the reign of Emperor Wu of Western Han (r. 141–87 BCE), the word *ru* in Chinese texts contained three sets of rather different meanings: classicist, Confucian, and government official.

47. The following books are good introductions to a general understanding of Eastern Zhou philosophies: de Bary (1960); Fung (1952); Ge (2001); Graham (1986); Hsiao (1979); Liu (1998); Nylan and Wilson (2010); and Wei (2003).

48. See Liu (1955); Nylan and Wilson (2010); Smith (1973) for the life and teachings of Confucius.

49. Confucius, however, did not advocate a wholesale restoration of the Western Zhou political order. Gradualism characterizes Confucius’s view of history. That is, he believed that just as the Shang political system was modeled on the political system of the Xia dynasty, with certain deletions and additions, the Western Zhou political system was modeled after that of the Shang dynasty, also with deletions and additions, and so on.

ming (rectification of names). The “good society,” he believed, existed during the Western Zhou period because at that time people in all social positions understood and fulfilled the duties associated with their particular social position. *Zheng ming* simply means that people of a certain social position must fulfill the duties and behaviors associated with that social position: “Let the ruler be ruler, the minister minister, the father father, the son son.”⁵⁰ To achieve a good society, the ruler must behave like a ruler, the minister like a minister, and to have a good family, the father must act like a father, and the son like a son. Obviously, Confucius did not believe that social stratification necessarily brought about social ills.⁵¹ It was only when social relationships in a stratified system became ambiguous that social conflict intensified, and turmoil and chaos ensued. This important sociological insight has been argued and empirically tested by many modern sociologists.⁵²

How could a good society, one in which people all behaved according to the duties associated with their social positions, be achieved? Believing that law could not be the basis of a good society, Confucius prescribed instead the cultivation of a virtue that he referred to as *ren* (whose various translations range from “benevolence,” “humaneness,” and “kindness” to “human excellence”). He urged that each individual cultivate *ren* and use it to regulate his own conduct in social relations. However, he explained the meaning of *ren* very differently in different contexts: He once stated that *ren* meant “don’t do to others what you yourself would not like.” At another time, *ren* simply meant “caring for others.” He also said that “a man of *ren*, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves—this may be called the art of *ren*.” He offered many more meanings besides.

Confucius emphasized the importance of education to achieving *ren*, a pursuit in which he engaged for most of his adult life. He taught his followers a wide range of subjects, and his principles of education stressed the importance of conscious effort by human moral agents, but his philosophy of education was very different from modern philosophies of education. The core of Confucius’s curriculum was directed toward human emotions rather than reason. Only when *ren* is embodied in customs and unreflective routines can a good society be attained. Confucius urgently promoted the importance of *li* (ritualized decorum), ritual music, and family relationships in education and in daily life. He believed that

50. All the quotations that are credited to Confucius in this section are from *Analects* (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980). See Huang (1997) for an English translation of the text.

51. Confucius never mentioned social mobility. But he believed that education should not be discriminatory (*you jiao wu lei*), and as already noted, many of his disciples were from poor families. Obviously he was promoting social mobility in a stratified society.

52. The argument that Gould (2003) makes in his analysis of violence and conflicts in early modern Corsican communities can be seen as a more recent confirmation of this Confucian maxim.

only by wholeheartedly practicing ritualized decorum in daily life and on ceremonial occasions could *ren* be achieved. As for the role of the family, Confucius believed that the family, with its extensive duties, responsibilities, and associated rituals sanctioned by lineage law, was the most important venue in which virtues and ritualized decorum were learned and became second nature.⁵³ A humane ruler starts by being a good father, a loyal minister starts by being a good son. This part of Confucius's thinking obviously bore a strong imprint of Western Zhou lineage law (see chapter 2).

Zheng ming was intended for a stratified society with clearly defined privileges and obligations. *Ren* is a morality-based, unwritten "social contract" among individuals occupying different strata in a hierarchical society. *Li* and ritual music function as mechanisms for the maintenance of both the stratification and the "social contract." Confucius believed that a system of interstate relations based on these principles would obviate the need for war, and a society based on these principles would obviate the need for conflict. Should a war break out, a state whose ruler followed these principles would prevail, because he would have strong support from all of his people, throughout society. In sum, Confucius saw the solution to the social and political problems of his time in the re-establishment of a moral order.

After Confucius's death other Confucian-minded thinkers came to the fore whose writings both added to and altered the Confucianism of the Master. During the Age of Total War, Mencius and Xunzi became the two most consequential thinkers; their writings formed the cornerstones of the idealistic and realistic wings of the Confucian tradition, respectively.⁵⁴ The two thinkers shared many of Confucius's basic assumptions, and both posited similar theories of state-society relations bearing the imprint of the Mandate of Heaven concept (see chapter 2): "The king is a boat and the people are water. Water can carry the boat; water can also overturn it," Xunzi said.⁵⁵ "The people are the most crucial and important [element of society], next is the state, least is the king," Mencius said.⁵⁶ Mencius and Xunzi also differed drastically in their understanding of human nature. Mencius believed that goodness was innate and required only enculturation; Xunzi asserted that selfishness and greed were basic to human nature and required strict control. From the idealism of the one and the realism/pessimism of the other sprang differing—even diametrically opposing—recommendations for persons, society, and the state. Faced with a world in which states were

53. Confucius set a premium on the role of filial piety (*xiao*) in regulating family relationships. He also stressed the importance in family life of rituals such as the three-year mourning period (during which a person cannot marry, cannot attend parties, must resign his official duties, and so on) after the death of each parent.

54. See Lau (1970) for his translation of *Mencius* and Watson (2003a) for the English translation of Xunzi's basic writings.

55. *Xunzi* ("Aigong 31"; reproduced in Wang 1988, p. 544).

56. *Mengzi* ("Jinxin xia 14"; reproduced in Yang 1980, p. 328).

becoming increasingly despotic, Mencius endorsed benevolent rule.⁵⁷ Xunzi, faced with the same world, advocated ruling the state with a combination of moral example and Legalist prescription, a stance that has led many to identify him as Confucian-Legalist. Xunzi also tutored the two greatest Legalist thinkers of his time: Li Si and Hanfeizi.⁵⁸ Li Si (280–208 BCE) played a crucial role in Qin's conquest of China as well as in setting up the political structure of the unified Qin empire;⁵⁹ Hanfeizi was unquestionably the greatest Legalist theoretician. Xunzi's unflinching sense of the world he lived in, along with his acceptance of Confucianism as the moral core of a better world, earned him high regard among the Han dynasty rulers and Confucians during and after the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) of the Western Han dynasty. Mencius's influence on Chinese politics did not grow significantly until the mid-Tang dynasty.⁶⁰ During and after the Song dynasty (960–1127), with the rise of Neo-Confucianism, Mencius's reputation rose, while Xunzi's declined (see chapter 12). During the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), as Chinese politics became more conservative and ritualistic, Mencius was elevated to—and retained—the status of Second Sage.

DAOISM

Daoism emerged considerably later than Confucianism. Han dynasty scholars credited this school of thought with a number of masters, the most important being Yang Zhu, Laozi, and Zhuangzi.⁶¹ This section only addresses the version of Daoism that had the greatest impact on Chinese political thought—that is, the Daoism expressed in *Dao and Its Power* (*Dao de jing*), a tersely written book attributed to Laozi.⁶² The date and authenticity of the text have been seriously questioned.⁶³ But the discovery of the oldest extant versions of the text, first in Mawangdui in the early 1970s and then in Guodian in 1993, has effectively done away with most of the skepticism.⁶⁴ Today, most historians believe that the treatise dates from before the end of the fourth century BCE.

57. Chan (2002).

58. Hanfeizi (d. 233 BCE) inherited a keen sense of realism from Xunzi, but abandoned Xunzi's Confucian core. See Watson (2003b) for the English translation of Hanfeizi's most important writings.

59. Bodde (1938).

60. Han Yu (768–824), a mid-Tang dynasty scholar-official, made a great effort to promote Mencius as the true successor of Confucius, and his effort was consequential.

61. Zhuangzi's writings were also highly influential in China, but more in the realms of literature, life attitudes, and aesthetic sensibilities. See Watson (1968) for an English translation of Zhuangzi's works.

62. *Laozi* (reproduced in Feng 1996) is available in numerous English translations. I find Lau (1963) and Mitchell (1988) most helpful.

63. As we can see in the *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Laozi and Hanfei"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2139–56), even Sima Qian had no clue to Laozi's dates.

64. The occupant of the Mawangdui tomb is known to have died in 193 BCE, the tomb at Guodian has been dated to about 300 BCE (Wenwu 1997). In the Guodian tomb Chinese archaeologists also found the only extant copies of twelve manuscripts by Warring States thinkers. These writings have shed great light on the development of Confucianism between the death of Confucius and the time of Mencius (L. Li 2002; Pang 1998).

By Laozi's time the feudal crisis that Confucius had experienced was long over. All the major states had developed multilayered, well-organized, and effective bureaucracies. Yet the interstate wars that Confucius had lived through were not only continuing but becoming increasingly vicious. The chaos created by the fighting gave rise to a broad intellectual tradition (with Laozi as one of its central figures) that criticized the foundation of their civilization and suggested passive and escapist solutions to the problems of the times. Laozi's version of Daoism contains two key concepts: *dao* and *wuwei*. The meaning of *dao* partly corresponds to the English "way" or "road." *Dao* was a popular term in ancient China, used by almost all known thinkers to refer to their overall or primary proposition. It encompassed a range of different concepts, from right behavior and proper social relations to logic, law, the nature of things, the forces propelling things or events, the right way (of doing things), a mysterious power that surrounds us, and so on. Even though the ways in which ancient Chinese thinkers used the term often overlapped, the differences in meaning are very obvious, as in the examples that follow.

Confucius once said, "If *dao* still exists under Heaven, then the state's power will not be controlled by the feudal ministers."⁶⁵ Mencius said, "Those who have the *dao* receive more support and those who lose the *dao* lose the support."⁶⁶ The Legalist-inclined thinker Shen Dao once said, "A state with *dao* is a state where authority resides in law rather than in private persons' deliberations and where the head of the state rather than people of great worth is respected."⁶⁷ Finally, Laozi said,⁶⁸ "Only when the great *dao* is forgotten do virtue and decorum appear. Only when people possess intelligence and wisdom are great falsehoods perpetrated."

In these examples, *dao* means proper social relations, virtues, and decorum to the Confucians, but it signifies good law and strategies implemented by strong rulers to the Legalists. Yet, to a Daoist, proper social relations, virtues and decorum, good law and strategies, and authoritative rulers were all signs that the *dao* had deteriorated, or were even the very reasons for that deterioration. Laozi believed that any human intervention in society, be it Confucian or Legalist, had a tendency to solve one problem by creating more. In this process society becomes increasingly complicated, more problems emerge, and human beings as a whole move increasingly farther from the good "way." The wisest conduct of society is neither an artificial system of decorum, as Confucians thought, nor a system of laws and punishments, as the Legalists maintained, but to "let be"—that is, to let

65. *Analepts* ("Jishi 16"; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 2521). The statement refers to the aristocratic ministers' appropriation of ducal power in Lu and many other states, leading to the feudal crisis (see chapter 5).

66. *Mengzi* ("Gongsun Chou xia 4"; reproduced in Yang 1980, p. 86).

67. See Thompson (1979, p. 277) for the text.

68. *Laozi* ("chap. 18"; reproduced in Feng 1996, p. 42).

life, and things, follow its own course. This brings us to Laozi's other important concept—*wuwei*.

Wuwei literally means nonaction, or not acting, even though in Laozi's writing *wuwei* also means not to overact, not to push things too far, to keep things simple, and to let all beings follow their natural courses. To Daoists, "*wuwei* is the highest virtue" (*shang de wuwei*) and "the most important *dao* of all."⁶⁹ In other words, *wuwei* is *dao*. Laozi's concept of *wuwei* has led some Western scholars to see him as a "primitive anarchist" and his ideas as a "primitive critique of high civilization."⁷⁰ Daoism has also been regarded as "[having] little to offer in the way of a governmental program."⁷¹ But, in fact, Laozi was always deeply concerned with the realpolitik, and his entire body of work can be seen as a text on statecraft. This side of Laozi deeply influenced Legalists such as Hanfeizi, Shen Dao, and Shen Buhai (d. 337 BCE).⁷² Laozi once said,

When I do not act, people will be naturally transformed. When I stay calm, people will be naturally rectified. When I take no initiative, people will become naturally rich. When I have no cravings, people will be naturally undemanding.⁷³

Dao does nothing, but it also does everything. If dukes and kings are able to abide by it, everything will naturally be transformed.⁷⁴

Laozi's treatise contains various other comments about strategies for ruling, but *wuwei* is central to his thought. A good ruler knows how to rule a country by less intervention (*wuwei erzhi*). In certain aspects Laozi's *wuwei* resembles Adam Smith's "invisible hand." When Laozi's idea was to some extent put into practice by rulers, as during the early Western Han dynasty,⁷⁵ it also produced a degree of prosperity that Smith would have anticipated. On the other hand, Laozi advocated a return to nature, whereas Smith's intent was to promote the wealth of a nation. Fundamentally, they differ.

Legalism

Legalists were realist-reformers. In a society in which lineage-law doctrines could no longer regulate social relations, they emphasized the importance of laws administrated by a bureaucracy (by no means what is meant nowadays by "rule

69. The first quotation comes from *Laozi* ("chap. 38"; reproduced in Feng 1996, p. 90), the second from chapter 4 of Lu Jia's (ca. 240–170 BCE) *New Discourses* ("Wuwei 4"; reproduced in Wang 1986, p. 59).

70. Schwartz (1985, pp. 189, 210).

71. Hucker (1975, p. 91).

72. Hanfeizi ("Zhudao 5"; reproduced in Wang 2003, pp. 26–30). Besides, "Jie Lao" and "Yu Lao" are two texts credited to Hanfeizi, though their authenticity has been challenged, that show the very strong influence of Laozi (Lundahl 1992, pp. 219–41).

73. *Laozi* ("chap. 57"; reproduced in Feng 1996, p. 132).

74. *Laozi* ("chap. 37"; reproduced in Feng 1996, pp. 85–86).

75. *Laozi* ("chap. 8"; reproduced in Feng 1996, pp. 16–18).

of law”). Amid fierce military competition, they promoted changes that would strengthen the state. Legalist philosophical traditions were developed in China out of a strong desire to bring peace and order to a chaotic world, not for the purpose of forging contractual relationships between the rulers and ruled. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, many states had implemented proto-Legalist measures soon after wars erupted in the early Eastern Zhou period. Yet it was only during the Age of Total War that Legalism was turned into a political theory and Legalist measures were more systematically implemented. Since Hanfeizi was by far the greatest Legalist theorist, the following discussion is based mainly on his works.

Legalism as a political philosophy promoted the establishment of a strong and effective state by various instrumental measures and means. The goal was to prevail in the increasingly brutal wars. This classic “ideology of war” was a pragmatic one;⁷⁶ Legalist thinkers had little interest in justifying their theses on moral grounds. The following quotation from Hanfeizi conveys this key Legalist spirit:

What a clever ruler needs in order to control his subordinates are no more than two power handles: punishment and virtue. . . . What is punishment, and what is virtue? I believe that punishment consists in killing and virtue consists in rewarding. Subordinates naturally fear punishment and crave reward. Therefore, if a ruler can keep punishments and rewards in his hands alone, his subordinates will be in awe of his mastery and avoid seeking benefits from him.⁷⁷

Legalist doctrines centered on three necessities: *fa* (penal law and bureaucracy), *shu* (administrative techniques coupled with the ruler’s artful deviousness), and *shi* (a ruler’s authority over his subjects).⁷⁸ *Fa* was not just about law. If we study Shang Yang’s achievements (discussed later in this chapter), it is clear that he introduced not only penal law but also a bureaucratic government. Legalist law, however, consisted mainly of draconian penal codes for controlling the population, promoting production, and rewarding good fighters in the endless wars. Moreover, although the penal codes were impersonal and objective, they were not quite universal: the king was not subject to the law. The Legalists did not regard law as the basis of a social contract between the rulers and the ruled. Nor did *fa* resemble the Roman concept of law, that is, that all individuals living under Roman rule, including the emperor and senators, were subject to the rule of law. Legalists’ only justification for draconian penal laws was their effectiveness in generating

76. Rubin (1976, p. 77).

77. Hanfeizi (“Erbing 7”; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 39).

78. Different Legalist thinkers had different imperatives. For Shang Yang, it was the penal codes and bureaucracy that made for a strong state; for Shen Buhai, it was the techniques whereby a ruler maintained an effective bureaucracy; for Shen Dao, it was the ruler’s control over officialdom, achieved by the ruler’s appearance as well as reality of authority. See Creel (1974) for more discussion of Shen Buhai.

manpower and resources for war. The same was true of the Legalist concept of bureaucratic government: Legalists advocated it only as a way of enhancing the power of the ruler and the efficiency of government for making war.

Once a strong bureaucracy is in place, how to make it efficient and how to prevent bureaucrats from turning their authority to their own purposes, at odds with the ruler's, become important. This brings us to Hanfeizi's concept of *shu*, which requires two related abilities. The first is to devise administrative measures to guarantee selection of officials according to merit, to check the performance of officials, and to harness and balance the branches of bureaucracy so as to prevent any of them from monopolizing power. The second necessary ability pertains to the ruler; he must keep the officials loyal and at the same time in fear of him. Yet it is not always in a ruler's best interests to control his subjects by fear. Effective rule also depends on gaining prestige and inspiring awe in his subjects, which Hanfeizi called "authority" (*shi*). Hanfeizi believed that a ruler's authority derived from three sources. The first was "natural," meaning inherited authority.⁷⁹ The second was the myth with which a skillful ruler enveloped himself to create awe in the minds of his subjects. In Hanfeizi's metaphor, a flying dragon only looked majestic in the sky against the clouds; without clouds, the flying dragon would resemble a worm.⁸⁰ The third was the ruler's ability to use the bureaucracy and law (*fa*), administrative techniques, and Machiavellian skills (*shu*) to sustain his authority over officials. "A king without *shu* will be deceived. Officialdom without *fa* will only bring chaos to the state," Hanfeizi said.⁸¹ A strong state would be one in which the ruler knew how to rule the officials by combining administrative techniques with cunning, and the officials in turn knew how to govern society through penal law and efficient bureaucracy.

The Legalists of the Age of Total War were not the only thinkers to emphasize the importance of instrumental rationalism. In the Age of Transition the military strategist Sun Wu (ca. 545–496 BCE) had already written his military treatise in a highly instrumental vein.⁸² During the Age of Total War several other military treatises with differing emphases also appeared.⁸³ Meanwhile, a group of people

79. Hanfeizi ("Nanshi 40"; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 388).

80. Hanfeizi ("Nanshi 40"; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 389). Unlike Weber, Hanfeizi seems to have put considerably less faith in innate charismatic authority. He believed that great leaders, such as the legendary Yao and Shun, appeared in the world "once every thousand generations" (Hanfeizi, "Nanshi 40"; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 392). Therefore, the practical measure he proposed to achieve a powerful kingship was for the king to create his own myth.

81. Hanfeizi ("Dingfa 43"; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 397).

82. In a recent article, Ho (1999) argues that Sun Wu's *Art of War* (reproduced in *Wujing qishu jianshang* 2002) was written about the end of the sixth century BCE, making it the earliest extant book written by a known individual. There are numerous English translations of this book.

83. See Lau and Ames (2003) on Sun Bin, a Warring States military thinker. See also Sawyer (1993) for a complete English translation of the seven Chinese military classics (*Taigong's Six Strategies*, *The Methods of Sima*, *The Art of War*, *Wuzi's Art of War*, *Wei Liaozi*, *Three Strategies of Huang Shigong*, and *Questions and Replies between Tang Taizong and Li Weigong*), most of which originated during the Eastern Zhou period.

later known as the strategist-persuaders also went from state to state and persuade the rulers to adopt their strategic recommendations based on instrumental maneuvering, and during the Age of Total War they played an important role in shaping interstate relations.⁸⁴ The war triggered competition that started at the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period and spurred the continuous dissemination and proliferation throughout the states of a “public good”-oriented instrumental rationality (see chapter 1). By the Age of Total War, this kind of a publicly oriented instrumentalism had come to dominate many aspects of political and social life. To understand the Age of Total War and China’s eventual unification under Qin, we need to analyze in more detail the nature of the Legalist measures. But first let us examine the nature and limitations of ancient China’s philosophies.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ANCIENT CHINA’S PHILOSOPHIES

Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism were very different philosophies, but none was oriented toward individuals and their rights.⁸⁵ Confucianism declared certain virtues and values to be essential to society; Daoism advocated not over-acting as a state strategy; Legalism promoted state power at the expense of individual rights. Moreover, in comparison with the Greek philosophical tradition, all the major ancient Chinese philosophies based their reasoning on a very strong sense of historical rationalism,⁸⁶ which, I would argue, constitutes Chinese philosophy’s other major tradition. In this section I shall briefly compare ancient Chinese philosophies with their Greek counterparts, first discussing historical rationalism as it pertained to ancient China and explaining its inhibiting effect on the development of theoretical-formal rationality in China. Although numerous schools of thought emerged during the Eastern Zhou period, what dominated practical politics in the Age of Total War was Legalism, a political philosophy advocating for a strong state. The synergy between the states’ war efforts and the Legalist reforms strengthened state power and defined the Age of Total War.

ANCIENT CHINESE HISTORICAL RATIONALISM

Confucianism and Daoism, despite their differences, agreed that the good society had been achieved in the past and that the task of good rulers was to learn from

84. An introduction to the nature of *Stratagems* (reproduced in Miao 1987) can be found in chapter 3, in the discussion of Eastern Zhou demography.

85. The characteristics of Eastern Zhou philosophies can be understood from many different perspectives (Fung 1952; Hegel 1956; Keightley 1990; Mote 1971; Puett 2001; Tu 1985, 1993). This book seeks to comprehend the features of ancient Chinese philosophies that shaped not only the Age of Total War but also China’s political history for the next 2,000 years.

86. That is to judge the effectiveness of an action by historical precedent and holistic/dialectic perspectives. See also chapter 1 for more discussion of this.

history and to restore a political order close to ancient ideals.⁸⁷ Legalism was the least historical of all the ancient Chinese philosophies because of its insistence that past practices might not serve in contemporary situations because conditions had changed. Nevertheless, an evolutionary theory of history is quite explicit in the Legalist doctrines.⁸⁸ Moreover, however instrumental the views of the Legalist thinkers were, their arguments were mostly based on real or figurative historical examples rather than on abstract postulates and deductions, as in Greek philosophy.⁸⁹ As Geoffrey Lloyd puts it, Greek thinkers never thought of their own civilization as “having been instituted by Sage Kings many centuries ago. . . . [T]here was no equivalent to the notion of a mandate from heaven, passing down from one dynasty to another, over vast spans of time. When the Greeks encountered Egypt, some reacted to the evidence of a past continuous culture there by registering their own, Greek ‘youth.’”⁹⁰ Greek historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides are famous; nevertheless, the dominant mode of thinking among Greek philosophers was unquestionably analytical rather than historical.⁹¹

Though Eastern Zhou philosophers were interested in the past, they were not interested in developing systematic theories to explain history. Their purpose was highly practical; it consisted of drawing moral and practical lessons from historical precedents, mainly for the purpose of legitimizing the position and guiding the behavior and decision-making of current rulers.⁹² Ancient Chinese philosophers’ interest in history cannot be understood as a mere expression of traditional rationality in Weber’s sense (see chapter 1). Their attitudes toward the past gave them a sense of how complex the webs of historical realities were, by allowing them to see historical events as interrelated. This explains why ancient

87. Confucius once said, “I followed the way of Zhou” (*Analects*, “*Bayi* 3”; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 2467), meaning that he regarded the early- to mid-Western Zhou sociopolitical order as a model of good society. Laozi’s view of history was not only recessive but also dialectic/circular. He said, “A mighty army is more likely to be crushed, and a piece of hardwood is more easily broken” (*Laozi*, “chap. 76”; reproduced in Feng 1996, p. 168). Mencius once said, “A sage-king will appear once every 500 years” (*Mengzi*, “Gongsun Chou xia 3”; reproduced in Yang 1980, p. 109). Although a Confucian, Mencius shared the Daoists’ cyclical view of history.

88. See, in particular, *Hanfeizi* (“Wudu 49”; reproduced in Wang 2003, pp. 442–55) for Hanfeizi’s vision of history. In the same essay, Hanfeizi expresses his evolutionary view of history in several different ways. One view holds that “people of high antiquity competed in virtues, people of middle antiquity competed in strategies, but contemporary people compete on the basis of the powers they have.”

89. See Hartwell (1971) for an introduction to the ways in which the Chinese reached conclusions by historical analogy instead of by hypothetical-deductive reasoning. See also Ames (1994, chap. 1) for a discussion of the differing interpretations of history among major Eastern Zhou thinkers.

90. Lloyd (2002, p. 14). Here Lloyd is referring to Plato’s discussion of Egyptian civilization in *Timaeus*.

91. The importance of “history” is also reflected in the way the ancient Chinese government was organized. During the reign of Emperor Wu of the Western Han dynasty (r. 141–87 BCE), more than half of the 362 officials in the chancellor’s office had job titles ending with the character *shi*, meaning “history” (Yan 2001, p. 75).

92. The Chinese called this *shi jian*—that is, using history as a mirror to learn things we are otherwise unable to learn. Sima Guang (1019–1086), a Song dynasty scholar-statesman, even entitled the history he wrote *A Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* (reproduced in Sima Guang 1919).

China's thinkers were mostly highly eclectic, as well as why correlative and holistic thinking were the hallmarks of Chinese philosophies.⁹³

In comparison with the Greek philosophers, ancient Chinese philosophers categorized things but did not think to separate them and analyze their relationships in an ahistorical, abstract manner, or to create context-free formulas to capture general relationships among different categories. Eastern Zhou philosophers were uninterested in abstract exercises, and their holistic perspective compelled them to see abstract categorization and theorization as artificial.⁹⁴ The Greek philosophers developed their arguments based on theoretical and metaphysical foundations; their Chinese counterparts discussed questions and developed arguments in contextualized historical settings. Whereas the Greeks developed the Pythagorean theorem, the Chinese were satisfied with the inductive knowledge that three squared plus four squared equals five squared. Ancient China's logicians created highly quotable phrases such as "a white horse is not a horse,"⁹⁵ but their Greek counterparts developed a "precise formula like the syllogism for measuring the validity of statements."⁹⁶ The Chinese preferred to concern themselves with the study and interpretation of natural phenomena that show mutual influence and connections in a time series (that is, those phenomena that have a "historical" quality) such as "magnetism and vibration, tides, and sonic and seismic waves," all of which represented weak spots in Greek science.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the Chinese devoted little effort to examining mechanism-based causations, whereas the Greeks were preoccupied with such questions.⁹⁸ These are just a few examples of differences in the ancient Chinese and Greek approaches.⁹⁹ In sum, the historical and holistic way of thinking allowed the Chinese to reason in a less biased manner, but at the same time, it suppressed the development of theoretical-formal rationality, which was characteristic of Greek philosophy, a point made in chapter 1.

93. McClellan and Dorn (1999).

94. Confucius, for example, deliberately refused to define any concept in general or abstract terms. He believed that the same concept meant different things in different contexts and to different individuals. He often explained the same concept or the same reality differently to different disciples according to the circumstances in which the question was asked as well as the personality of the disciple who asked it. His diverse explanations of the concept *ren* (perfect virtue), discussed earlier, illustrate this point.

95. The quote is the topic sentence of a famous essay entitled "Discourse on the White Horse" (*Gongsun Long Zi*; reproduced in Gao and Lin 1990, p. 190), credited to Gongsun Long (ca. 330–242 BCE). The key argument of Gongsun's essay is as follows: "Horse" denotes form and "White" denotes color. What denotes color does not denote form. Therefore it is said that a white horse is not a horse." The essay then goes on in several interesting directions to elaborate this key point. See Li (1967, pp. 30–32) for an English translation of this essay.

96. Mote (1971, p. 43).

97. Gernet and Vernant (1988, p. 86).

98. Lloyd (1996, chap. 5).

99. For more discussion of the similarities and differences between ancient Chinese and Greek approaches to knowledge, see also Gernet and Vernant (1988); Harbsmeier (1998); Lloyd and Sivin (2002); Lloyd (2004, 2005). On the nature of Chinese philosophies and sciences, see Bodde (1991); Harper (1998); Needham (1959, 1965, 1971); Needham and Sivin (1980); Sivin (1969).

POLITICAL DOMINANCE OF LEGALISM

Throughout their adult lives Confucius and Mencius went from one ruler to another to promote their views, but in the end no ruler took their social programs seriously.¹⁰⁰ Daoists were less inclined to try to convince rulers to adopt some social programs, and their impact on Warring States politics was also minimal: while they were advocating the return to a primitive society, society was becoming increasingly complicated and political power more and more concentrated in the hands of a few. During the Age of Total War the direct impact of Confucianism and Daoism on politics was minor in comparison with that of Legalism and its sibling “schools” of thought, such as the strategist-persuaders and military strategists.¹⁰¹ Why? The most straightforward answer is, as Hui has suggested, that unlike the early modern European rulers, the rulers of Eastern Zhou China were able to identify state-strengthening as their best strategy.¹⁰² This argument has certain merits, although I doubt that a ruler had to be very smart to recognize that Legalist measures were the best way to build up state power to survive in the war-induced, fiercely competitive environment of the Age of Total War. The question is why early modern European rulers were not as “clever” as their ancient Chinese counterparts. To understand the differences, we must turn away from rulers’ strategies to the social conditions that facilitated or constrained the rulers’ choices.

Warfare in second-millennium Europe took place in an environment replete with aristocracies, churches, and independent and semi-independent commercial cities—all wielding various degrees of power.¹⁰³ Aristocratic power had slowly declined in Europe during and after the High Middle Ages,¹⁰⁴ yet the aristocracy remained a significant actor there in comparison with the much weakened aristocracy in Eastern Zhou China after the feudal crisis (see chapter 5). The power of the papacy was also somewhat weakened in Europe during the Late Middle Ages,¹⁰⁵ which provided the ground for the Reformation and the end of Christian unity.¹⁰⁶ But religious actors as a whole were still a formidable power

100. Examples would be his conversations with King Hui of Wei (r. 369–335 BCE) and King Xuan of Qi (r. 319–301 BCE). While both kings were desperate to learn how to gain the upper hand in war, Mencius tried to persuade them of the importance of virtuous rule. Mencius was treated with courtesy in the states that he visited, but no ruler was convinced by his arguments. See *Mengzi* (“Lianghuiwang shang 1”; reproduced in Yang 1980, pp. 1–25). See also Nivison (1999, pp. 770–72) for a similar analysis on Mencius’s meetings with the kings of Wei and Qi.

101. Famous Legalists, such as Li Kui, Wu Qi, Shang Yang, Shen Buhai, and Li Si, were also top officials of various states.

102. Hui (2005, chaps. 1–2).

103. Backman (2003); Finer (1997, vol. 2, chap. 5).

104. This was a very slow process. Nobles became increasingly incapable of competing with the kings in making war, extracting resources, and maintaining public order, and after the tenth century, they gradually became servants of the kings (Brauer and van Tuyl 2008, pp. 53–59; Speed 1996, chap. 3). Meanwhile, knightly warfare gradually became obsolete after the infantry re-emerged as an effective fighting force (Finer 1975; Howard 1976).

105. Jordan (2001, pp. 314–21); Strayer (1980, pp. 237–313).

106. Mann (1986, pp. 463–72) has given an excellent analysis of the challenges that the Christian ecumene faced after the Reformation.

in early modern Europe.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, beginning simultaneously with the partial decline of aristocratic and church power was the rise of the bourgeoisie in the cities, posing an organized challenge to state power. Ideologically these powerful actors not only facilitated the emergence of political philosophies that challenged the rise of the “strong state” in Europe, but also affected the ways in which the theories that promoted the strong state were presented. Organizationally, these rising powerful actors advanced and further developed political philosophies that defended their interests and hampered attempts at state centralization in Europe that were triggered by warfare. For example, the war-ridden environment of early modern Europe also produced “Legalist” philosophers, such as Machiavelli and Hobbes, but there was already a crucial difference between Chinese Legalists and their European counterparts: in Chinese Legalist thought, the state had absolute power, not only above its subjects but also above the law, whereas the European Hobbesian state ruled its people based on contractual relationships. More importantly, along with the Hobbesian ideal of the strong state, early modern Europe also experienced the emergence of liberalism and later of socialism. All these ideologies attracted forceful actors and effectively counterbalanced one another on both ideological and political fronts. Liberalism, socialism, and their spokesmen and organizations provided alternative visions of political order, hampered the development of the “absolutist state,” and paved the way for the rise of industrial capitalism, constitutionalism, and democracy.¹⁰⁸ In sum, “European dominance-seekers” were unable to reach the same goal as their ancient Chinese counterparts not because “they did not employ the whole repertoire of the logic of domination,” as Hui has claimed.¹⁰⁹ Rather, they were compelled by historical conditions to adopt what Hui considers “self-weakening” policies.¹¹⁰

Eastern Zhou warfare, however, began in a society in which the political, ideological, and economic powers were not that differentiated. The emergence of philosophies and the rise of intensive market relations during the Eastern Zhou

107. Bossy (1985); Chilton (2006); McLeod (1997).

108. The concept of “absolutism” developed in the eighteenth century to describe Louis XIV’s reign. According to Anderson (1974, p. 17), absolutist states “introduced standing armies, a permanent bureaucracy, national taxation, a codified law, and the beginnings of a unified market.” The rise of absolutist states had been regarded as a Europe-wide phenomenon predating the emergence of nation-states. In earlier years absolutism was defined as “a form of monarchical government in which the prince’s authority is in fact free (unbound, *absoluta*) from checks by any higher authority or organ of popular representation” (Lousse 1964, p. 43). Such an understanding of early modern European states, however, is considerably exaggerated. True, the European states had grown at the expense of aristocratic and ecclesiastical power during and after the High Middle Ages, but their growth had also met strong local resistance and was thus nonlinear. Royal power was frequently compromised and various kinds of classes and regional prerogatives were retained even in France, where absolutism supposedly had its fullest development (Bonney 1978; Hickey 1986). It is, therefore, better to see absolutism and constitutionalism as two subtypes of a single early-modern European form of state: “a weak state in relation to the powerful groups of civil society, but a state that increasingly coordinated those groups’ activities to the point where we may begin to talk of an organic class-nation state whose central point was either the court or the court/parliament of the state” (Mann 1986, p. 481).

109. Hui (2005, p. 35).

110. A more detailed summary of Hui’s argument will be given in chapter 8, where we analyze the differences between Eastern Zhou China and early modern European international systems.

period were largely consequences of a war-driven rationalization process. Neither powerful churches nor commercial cities existed at the time. As discussed earlier, Western Zhou feudalism involved only two actors—the dukes and the aristocrats, and with the feudal crisis the ducal power in Jin, Qi, and most other major states collapsed. In these states, political power then devolved into the hands of a few surviving aristocratic lineages. Learning from historical lessons and compelled by the pressure of interstate war, these surviving aristocratic lineages that had usurped state power all opted for the creation of more effective bureaucracies, which also ended the aristocracies' control of the states.

The Age of Transition saw the emergence of a status group called *shi*. As noted earlier, although some prominent *shi* enjoyed great power and prestige during the Age of Total War, they did not possess independent organizational bases, as the aristocrats, bishops, and bourgeoisie had in early modern Europe, and they were only able to compete as individuals for a ruler's favor.¹¹¹ At the beginning of the Age of Total War, when the ancient Chinese philosophies were first emerging, both the old ducal houses and the aristocratic lineages were greatly weakened, and newly strengthening bureaucratic states were the only powerful actors on the scene (with partial exceptions in Chu).¹¹² Without other powerful social actors fighting for viable alternatives, rulers had the freedom to choose. The “clever strategies” adopted by the warring states rulers, therefore, reflect less their cleverness and more the autonomy they enjoyed after the collapse of aristocratic power.

Without other social pressures except for the pressure from the increasingly fierce warfare, rulers understandably favored Legalism. During the Age of Total War, while numerous kinds of philosophical speculation floated around in society, in the realm of politics, especially in Qin and Wei, Legalism was dominant. Confucianism, a political philosophy that aimed to model political relations on ritual-based familial relations, did not become a major state ideology until approximately four hundred years after its inception. This was only natural: in the context of the time, while the Legalists were campaigning for a state with unchecked power, the effective mobilizing and fighting capacity brought about by Legalist reforms made Legalism the most attractive ideology to ambitious or beleaguered rulers.

During the Eastern Zhou period, the synergy between war and Legalism not only strengthened state power but also facilitated the coming of the Age of Total War, while it prevented other Chinese philosophies and market relations from any

111. Lloyd (1996, p. 45) has also noticed that rulers had been the major targets of persuasion for most Warring States thinkers. By contrast, the major targets of the Greek philosophers were generally their peers and to a much lesser extent, the rulers.

112. During the Ages of Hegemons and Transition, Chu had stronger kings, and Qin had a weak aristocracy, which allowed these two states to avoid the feudal crisis occurring in the other major states (see chapter 5). Therefore, when the other major states, emerging from the feudal crisis, had become newly bureaucratic states, the rulers and aristocracies in Chu and Qin still maintained their traditional balance.

further flourishing. But the Legalists advocated a state so strong that it was independent of the checks and balances of society and could act solely according to ends-justify-means calculations. Such calculations could not be a legitimizing force for any premodern social order, because any social order based on instrumentalism would be unable to sustain any values-based challenges in the long run. This limitation prepared the ground for the quick demise of the Qin dynasty (see chapter 9).

SUMMARY

During the Age of Transition, with the feudal crisis and rise of bureaucratic states, the status group called *shi* emerged. Some of these *shi* wrote treatises voicing their concerns about the problems of society and recommending what they saw as remedies. This facilitated the emergence of various philosophies during the Age of Total War. The most influential ones were later labeled Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism. The *shi* and the philosophies they developed had two major characteristics, acquired from the historical/structural conditions that had nurtured these thinkers and shaped their thoughts.

First, although the successful *shi* enjoyed great prestige and power during the Age of Total War, they did not as a group have organizational bases and military means independent of the state. Individual *shi* came to power through a ruler's recognition. Almost all of ancient China's extant philosophical writings are therefore treatises written to appeal to the rulers. The activities of *shi* in the end only expanded state power without being able to balance it. Second, ancient Chinese philosophies were precocious in the origination of historical rationalism. The early maturation of historical rationalism suppressed the development of theoretical-formal rationality in China, and greatly lessened the possibility for Chinese philosophers to theorize privately oriented instrumental rationality into positive values.

Although different ancient Chinese philosophies flourished during the Age of Total War, Legalism was the prevailing ideology of rule, with which no other ancient Chinese philosophy could compete. What emerged during the Age of Total War was, therefore, a synergistic relationship between warfare and Legalist reforms that was partly inspired by Legalist doctrines. While increasingly fierce military competition called for thorough Legalist reforms, successful Legalist reforms greatly strengthened the states, allowing them to fight more efficiently. As a result, the scale and duration of warfare kept increasing.

In the Age of Total War: Absolutism Prevailing

In the previous chapter, we analyzed the social conditions that led to the emergence of ancient China's philosophies and the dominance of Legalism in politics. For a more concrete sense of Legalist transformations and the political and social implications of related state policies, as well as of the connections among warfare, sociopolitical conditions, and a state's strategic choices, we turn here to the *realpolitik*. This chapter touches upon five related topics: (1) Legalist transformations, especially those in Qin, in light of their synergistic relationship with warfare; (2) new state-society relationships after the Legalist reforms, particularly the conditions that made total war possible; (3) the development of technologies in response to war-induced competition; (4) the relationships between warfare and large-scale state-sponsored water projects, including a critique of Wittfogel's "oriental despotism" theory; and (5) the rising power of merchants during the Eastern Zhou period and contraction of their power in the anticommerce Legalist states. Together, this chapter seeks to lay out the quick growth of state power propelled by war, the marginalization of societal forces by increasingly powerful states, and above all, the conditions that made total war possible.

Patricia Crone has made a now widely accepted argument that the preindustrial state has to be "understood in a minimalist rather than a maximalist vein: the state did a little and the subjects did the rest."¹ The logic behind Crone's argument is that the limited agricultural resources and infrastructural capacity of the preindustrial world precluded the possibility of building a sustainable maximalist state. This chapter, however, asserts that ancient Chinese states were competing to establish a kind of maximalist state before and immediately after the Qin conquest of China. It must be stressed that my assertion does not violate Crone's logic: First, some preindustrial rulers did dream of and make a real effort to build a maximalist state. Second, the minimalist state depicted by Crone provides a stable foundation for a preindustrial state, which could then endure for a long time. But at this particular moment in ancient China's history a state had

1. Crone (1989, p. 47).

to mobilize every possible resource merely to survive, which entailed outdoing all its competitors in increasingly brutal total war. Third, the mighty Qin dynasty lasted only fifteen years after it unified China (see chapter 9). The fragility of this militarily powerful empire attests the validity of Crone's logic. Furthermore, early Western Han rulers and thinkers, citing as a lesson the quick fall of the Qin dynasty (see chapter 10), very strongly favored a minimalist state, which points to the fact that the Qin empire was *not* a minimalist state. Finally, although most states in later Chinese dynasties came closer than Qin to Crone's minimalist state, the institutional legacies of the Qin dynasty's maximal state-building effort, such as an effective and strongly merit-based bureaucracy, local mutual surveillance apparatuses, and potent welfare provisions (by premodern standards), had given China a very strong state tradition.

LEGALIST REFORMS AND THE SPREAD OF TOTAL WAR

As noted in chapter 5, the Legalist transformations began in the new state of Wei soon after the partitioning of Jin in 453 BCE. The Legalist measures greatly enhanced state power, and Wei soon dominated in interstate warfare. Wei's ascendancy posed a great threat to neighboring states and impelled them to either initiate or accelerate their own reforms, creating an isomorphic moment in the history of China that in a sense resembled the coerced modernization in non-Western countries after the rise of the West (see chapter 13). The historical records show that major reforms were initiated in Zhao in 403 BCE; in Chu, in about 389 BCE; in Han, in 355 BCE; in Qi, in about 357 BCE, and finally, in Qin in 356 and 350 BCE. Qin's reforms not only happened later, but also were carried out more systematically than most of the others. Why these reforms were so crucial to the expansion of total war and to Qin conquest becomes clear when we examine their major elements, engineered by Shang Yang in 356 and 350 BCE.

Shang Yang (ca. 390–338 BCE) was born into a distant branch of the Wey ruling house. He had studied with Li Kui, the orchestrator of Wei Legalist reform, and was a retainer of Gongshu Cuo, who had once served as Wei's chief minister. In 361 BCE, after seeing a notice published under the name of Duke Xiao of Qin (r. 361–338 BCE) entitled "Seeking Talent" (*qiu xian ling*), Shang Yang traveled to Qin, bringing with him a Wei legal text authored by Li Kui. The motive behind Duke Xiao's decree was obvious. Qin was under constant military pressure from Wei and a large part of Qin's land west of the Yellow River had been lost to Wei. Duke Xiao's decree had promised: "If anyone can come up with extraordinary plans to strengthen Qin, I will promote him to a high rank in government and share with him the Qin territories."²

2. *Grand Historian* ("History of Qin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 202).

In Qin Shang Yang spearheaded two waves of reforms, one in 356 BCE and another in 350 BCE. His measures were complicated, and the following summary gives only a rough picture of where the reforms were headed:³ (1) Shang Yang removed powerful aristocrats from government posts and established a centralized bureaucratic state run by officials selected for their capacities. He also divided Qin's territory into forty-one counties and appointed salaried officials to administer them. (2) Shang Yang established penal codes even for petty crimes. He also enforced a family and hostel registration system and a collective responsibility system to tighten the control of his subjects. Under the collective responsibility system, families were grouped together in fives or tens. If anyone in the group committed a crime, the whole group would be liable unless a member of the group reported the crime to the authorities. Guests were not allowed to stay in their host's home or in a hostel overnight without a permit. (3) In the army, promotion and pay or rewards were linked directly to battlefield performance. (4) Land was redistributed and incentives were given to those who undertook to cultivate wastelands.⁴ To enhance the state's capacity to collect agricultural products, extended families were forced to divide into nuclear families, and grain tax for a family that include more than one adult male was doubled. The tax rate was no longer based on the size of the family but on the amount of land the family cultivated. (5) On the assumption that commercial activities interfered with agricultural production, Shang Yang also enacted laws and monetary measures to discourage and regulate commerce.

Shang Yang's reform measures are generally accepted as historically credible, but for a long time we knew little about the actual functioning of Qin law and government after Shang Yang. The lack has now been partially remedied by the discovery of fragments Qin legal documents at Shuihudi in the tomb of a Qin legal clerk who died in 217 BCE, four years after the Qin conquest.⁵ After these texts became

3. The following summary of Shang Yang's reform is mainly based on Yang (1998, pp. 202–10) and on Xu, Si, and Yang (1995). I also consulted the *Book of Lord Shang* (reproduced in Xie and Zhu 2003). The *Book of Lord Shang* bears the name of Shang Yang. It is thought that although Shang Yang could not have been the sole author of the book, it contains a considerable amount of his writing, in fragments that were widely available during the Warring States period (Levi 1993). For the English translation of the text, see Duyvendak (1928).

4. The traditional account says that Shang Yang promoted private ownership of land (e.g., Yang 1998, p. 205). But some scholars argue that Shang Yang only redistributed the land and legally guaranteed people's right to grow crops on the land they received. In other words, his reform did not really constitute private land ownership (S. Yang 2003, chap. 3). The evidence from Qin legal documents unearthed in Sichuan (Zhang 1983) and Qi legal documents unearthed at Yinqueshan both support the latter view (Liu 1987). Whether the redistributed land that the peasants received could then be bought and sold as private property we do not really know. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Xiao He"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2013–20), however, records that Xiao He (b. 193 BCE), the founding chief chancellor of the Western Han dynasty, bought up large amount of land and houses to sell for profit, so buying and selling land must have become very common in Xiao He's time. This author interprets these scraps of information to mean that the peasants did have certain rights over the land distributed to them by the state. But China never had private land ownership similar to that of the ancient Greco-Roman world.

5. The tomb was excavated in 1977 at Shuihudi, which is located in Yunmeng commandery of present-day Hubei Province.

widely available in the 1980s, they spurred research inside and outside of China,⁶ greatly enriching our understanding of the Qin legal system and government.

The Shuihudi legal documents show that the Qin government was more concerned with legal procedures than had been previously realized.⁷ Legalist principles dominated Qin law, but Qin law was also legitimized by yin-yang philosophy, which linked the application of law to the functioning of the cosmos.⁸ Some of the legal codes also followed lineage-law principles and contained considerable Confucian elements.⁹ Although Shang Yang advocated applying law impartially to all offenders except the king, the legal documents show that aristocrats and officials of higher rank tended to receive lighter punishment than ordinary people for similar crimes committed.¹⁰ Scholars acknowledge that the contents of the Shuihudi fragments largely confirm our general understanding of the Qin legal system and government following Shang Yang's reforms.¹¹ The legal documents are draconian,¹² focused not on the rights of subjects but on "the decisions of rulers and officials to guide and define the goals of the legal system."¹³ They heavily stress the duty of local officials to monitor and support agricultural production, increase taxes, conscript labor into services for the state, and punish those who violate Qin law—all primary foci of Shang Yang's reform.¹⁴ Various cases show the application of the collective responsibility system, also one of Shang Yang's key reform measures. Several places in the legal documents reveal Qin households to have been very small,¹⁵ demonstrating the effectiveness of Shang Yang's policy to break extended or merely large households into nuclear units. The Qin state also worked to create an efficient bureaucracy, establishing complicated selection and performance evaluation procedures.¹⁶ Finally, the documents stipulate that an entire squad would be awarded aristocratic rank if the soldiers in that squad among together killed five enemies, that a soldier could accumulate aristocratic rank by killing an enemy in combat, and that he could forfeit the

6. See, for example, Gao (1998); Huang (1979); Hulsewé (1985); X. Li (1985, 2004); *Shuihudi qin mu zhu jian* (1978); Tang (1981); Turner (1989, 1992, 1993); D. Wei (2003); Yates (1995); Yu (1980).

7. Hulsewé (1985, p. 7); K. Turner (1992, p. 10).

8. Q. Li (1998); Yates (1995).

9. Jin (1993); Wu and Wang (2005).

10. Hulsewé (1985, pp. 7–8).

11. Lewis (2007, p. 30).

12. He (2003).

13. K. Turner (1992, p. 44).

14. X. Li (2004, pp. 104–5). The legal documents contain numerous legal codes regulating agricultural production. For example, it specifies details such as the quantities of different kinds of seeds to be sowed on a given amount of land. It demands the locals report the amount of precipitation and droughts. It also contains numerous legal codes specifying how cattle should be raised and managed, how farmers who raised cattle well should be rewarded, how cattle farmers who did not do their job well should be penalized, how farmers who had overburdened their cattle should be punished, and how cattle farmers and local officials should be punished if over one-third of the cattle die within a year in a barn (Hulsewé 1985, pp. 21–26).

15. Hulsewé (1985, p. 11).

16. Yates (1995).

aristocratic rank to free an enslaved wife.¹⁷ The records provide a clear picture that Qin law connected battle performance to personal rewards, motivating Qin warriors to become killing machines.¹⁸

In short, Shang Yang aimed to establish a centralized, bureaucratic state that tightly controlled its subjects and a society that was organized as an extension of the army.¹⁹ One of the primary purposes of such a state was to extract the maximum amount of human and material resources to win wars. It is no wonder that one of the treatises credited to Shang Yang directly links agriculture to warfare, arguing that an emphasis on agriculture would not only increase agricultural productivity but also produce a population that could be easily disciplined and mobilized for warfare.²⁰

Made newly powerful by the Legalist transformations, states during the Age of Total War were able to mobilize larger armies for longer wars, and to undertake ambitious road and river projects to benefit communications, agricultural production, and extraction capacity, all for the purposes of war. After 405 BCE,²¹ and especially after 350 BCE, when Shang Yang's reforms in Qin were well under way, territorial expansion and demographic weakening of the enemy states (read mass killings) became common. This is why fifteen of the twenty clashes with reportedly over 20,000 casualties occurred in the sixty-one years between 317 and 256 BCE. This kind of synergism between Legalist reforms and war, in conjunction with territorial acquisition as the motive for war, became the engine of history and paved the way for Qin conquest of China in 221 BCE.

REFORMS AND WARRING STATES SOCIETY

In her recent book Victoria Hui proposes that "Out of the need to motivate people to fight and die in war," three major points of bargaining between the state and society surfaced in Warring States China after the Legalist reforms, namely, "material welfare, legal protection, and freedom of expression."²² This proposition clearly implies that the state of Qin produced better warriors because the Legalist reforms in Qin had given people better access to justice, more economic and citizenship rights, and more freedom of expression. I have argued

17. Gao (1981, p. 175). Please note that the Qin aristocratic ranking consisted of no fewer than twenty ranks and only the lower to middle aristocratic rankings were open for warriors to move up step by step through their outstanding battle performance.

18. From Shuihudi documents: a warrior was holding an enemy's head (as evidence for claiming a reward), and a fellow soldier tried to kill him to get the head. The attempted murderer was caught (Yu and Li 1981, p. 166). Clearly the Qin military reward system had great impact on the behavior of the warriors.

19. This is why details of Qin law closely reflect the principles of military law at the time (Yates 2009).

20. *Book of Lord Shang* ("Nongzhan 3"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 2003, pp. 19–29).

21. In that year Zhao, Wei, and Han together defeated Qi. Thirty thousand Qi warriors were reported killed and 2,000 of their chariots captured.

22. Hui (2005, p. 171).

earlier (chapter 6) that the various freedoms enjoyed by the *shi* did not amount to “freedom of expression” in the modern sense, which essentially is based on state-society bargaining, nor were the “material welfare” and “legal protections” that Qin subjects had obtained from the Legalist transformations the result of state-society bargaining.

To disagree with Hui’s characterization of the benefits of Legalist reforms is not to deny that Qin soldiers were rewarded if they fought well—to get soldiers to fight, some kind of carrot-stick mechanism is always necessary. But the “carrots” potentially available to Qin subjects were absolutely *not* achieved by collective state-society bargaining. They were purely an element of the ruling strategy, which had two components: to let subjects know beyond doubt how severely they would be punished if they disobeyed orders and to reward those who obeyed orders and whom the rulers esteemed good fighters. Subjects had little bargaining power. Therefore the “reward” should not be understood to consist of “rights” in the modern sense of the term. Xunzi’s comment on Qin’s recently enacted reforms and its military might serves as a good recasting of these points:²³

As for the rulers of Qin, they only allow their subjects to sustain their lives in very limited ways under severe conditions. They impose draconian laws on them, terrorize them with authority, embitter them with hardship, seduce them with rewards and intimidate them with punishment. They let their subjects know that the only way to gain benefits from their superiors is to perform well in battle. The Qin rulers oppress their subjects, deny them any benefits before they achieve distinction in battle, and set the scale of benefit according to their military achievements. If a man returns from battle with five enemy heads, he will be made the head of five families in his neighborhood. This is why Qin had more and better troops and a more efficient system of taxation. Qin’s repeated military victories in the last four generations are not accidental, but the result of state policies.

Xunzi’s “four generations” refer to the reigns (in chronological order) of Duke Xiao, King Huiwen, King Wu, and King Zhaoxiang. Together, they date from 361 to 251 BCE, during which Qin’s state power had grown steadily as the result of its military successes. Qin’s prolonged period of nothing but victories attests the effectiveness of Shang Yang’s reforms.

For a better sense of what Legalism can and did accomplish and of the historical conditions against which it operated, let us consider the ways in which rulers are able to get people to fight for them. I evince that rulers have only three ideal-typical ways to convince or compel their people to fight: by paying

23. Xunzi (“Yibing 15”; reproduced in Wang 1988, pp. 273–74).

the people in money or in kind (mercenaries), by convincing the people that they were fighting for their “own causes” (patriotism, nationalism, or honor), and by coercing them to fight and rewarding those who fight well.²⁴ Obviously, the Legalist reform implemented by Shang Yang was very close to the third. I would also assert that each method works better than the others in some social contexts than others, and, depending on the circumstances will have different historical consequences. Simply put, the first method may work better for a rich state with weak despotic power. That was why monetarily rich European city-states of a certain period benefited from using mercenaries to fight their wars.²⁵ But hiring mercenaries adds significantly to the cost of war and can further weaken the state by increasing its reliance on the financial and political support of the moneyed classes; moreover, the loyalty of mercenary soldiers is unreliable. The second method produces brave and inexpensive soldiers, but in patriotic or nationalistic wars, rewards, say citizenship, are needed to give soldiers a stake in the fighting. This, in the long run, will also weaken a state’s despotic power. The third method is also inexpensive but offers no guarantee that the soldiers will fight well. Compared with the second method, its effectiveness hinges far more on the state’s coercive power. Still (assuming that such coerced soldiers eke out a victory), this method would further strengthen state power because, unlike the first two methods, it does not strengthen any other social forces. Traditional rulers would likely prefer this method, assuming they had the strength to employ it. Early modern European states were compelled to follow methods of military mobilization similar to the first two ideal types, because they were checked by the rising bourgeoisie, by religious actors, and by the aristocrats.²⁶ Ancient Chinese states, on the other hand, were for centuries not effectively checked by any other economic, ideological, or political actors. Therefore, sooner or later during the Age of Total War, the Chinese states were able to opt for strategies closer to the third ideal-typical method, that is, to coerce their subjects into fighting or producing the material resources to support the war, and to reward those who fought well. Moreover, weapons were produced at state-controlled workshops, and subjects who were not part

24. These three are ideal types because in reality soldiers could be induced to fight through a mixture of methods. For example, knightly warfare in feudal Europe could be regarded as a combination of the first two methods. The knights were paid in kind through the grants of lands, and a knightly culture was cultivated in such a way that fighting bravely became part of knightly ethics.

25. Howard (1976); Tilly (1992).

26. Tilly (1992) divides premodern European states into three categories based on their ways of extracting resources for war—coercion, coercion/capital, and capital. Tilly (1992, p. 30) also defines a “coercive state” as one in which “rulers squeezed the means of war from their own populations and others they conquered, building massive structures of extraction in the process.” According to Tilly’s definition, all the Chinese states during the Age of Total War were coercive states. No coercion/capital or capital types of states existed in ancient China. And no premodern European state, not even the most coercive ones, such as Russia and Poland, was nearly as coercive as the ancient Chinese states.

of the army were coerced into agricultural production to support the war. Such a state could sustain a total war for a long time without sinking into a severe economic crisis.²⁷

Coercion and its immediate effectiveness had unintended consequences. It made Legalism the dominant ideology in politics, while all other philosophies mostly floated in intellectual circles. It allowed rulers to disregard the importance of persuasion and retarded the development, in the army or the populace at large, of any feeling of proto-national or protopatriotic consciousness, though an “our cause” sentiment is supposedly inevitable in a situation of constant warfare.²⁸ Throughout the Eastern Zhou period, scholars and thinkers were loyal to specific masters or teachers, not to the state as an entity. They would serve whichever ruler offered them better rewards. The stronger and bigger states always had an advantage, because the bigger the state, the better the prize it was able to offer (in both material goods and the possibility of fulfilling one’s ambition). The ruler’s indifference to the need to persuade their people to identify with the state further facilitated the Qin conquest.

REFORMS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXTENSIVE TECHNOLOGIES

During the Ages of Transition and Total War, military and other technologies also advanced quickly, driven by military competition and abetted by rational thinking. The Chinese invented the blast furnace and several other methods of iron production that the Europeans did not master until early modern times.²⁹ By the early fifth century BCE, the state of Wu was able to build fighting ships that in 484 BCE sailed north in the East China Sea from present-day Shanghai to the Shandong region to attack Qi (see chapter 5). Advances in weaponry included the invention of crossbows, numerous different kinds of siege engines, and defensive weaponry.³⁰ The Chinese adopted the ox-drawn plough

27. During the civil war between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists (1946–1949), the Communists adopted a strategy of military mobilization resembling that adopted by ancient China’s Warring States, in the sense that it relied little on monetary resources (the strategy was known as “war-time communism”). In the beginning of the civil war, when American journalist Anna Louis Strong asked Mao Zedong how long the Nationalists could sustain the war without US support, Mao replied: “Over a year.” When asked how long the Communists could sustain the war, Mao’s reply was: “We can fight on and on until we win.” (Mao 1966, pp. 1189–90). Although being typically optimistic, Mao also made his point. As it turned out, even with US support the civil war induced runaway inflation and strong public resentment in regions controlled by the Nationalist government, which decisively contributed to the Nationalist government’s downfall. The Communists were able to sustain the war indefinitely by relying only on the grain provided by farmers in areas they controlled and weapons seized from their enemies.

28. Gorski (2003).

29. Many heat treatment methods, particularly quenching and annealing techniques, were developed at about the same time. Various methods of carbonizing steel were also invented (Hua 1976; Li 1975).

30. Many weapon-making and other military technologies are recorded in the writings of Mohists. The chapters following the “Siege Defense” (*Beichengmen*) chapter of *Mozi* (reproduced in Zhang 1988, pp. 465–89) are a rich source information about ancient China’s military technologies.

and many other new technologies that increased agricultural production. The widespread use of irrigation and fertilizers meant that more land could be used to grow crops, and yields throughout China increased.³¹ These are but a few examples.³²

In analyzing the decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire, Michael Mann identifies two kinds of technologies. *Intensive* technologies, such as the blast furnace and steam engine, are those “aimed at extracting more outputs in the form of energy and resources from fewer inputs, in particular from fewer labor inputs.” *Extensive* technologies are aimed at “extracting more outputs from more coordinated, organized inputs.”³³ Mann asserts that the Romans were more interested in developing extensive, organizational technologies than intensive, labor- or energy-saving technologies because of the abundance of dependent labor and Rome’s coercive power.³⁴ Mann’s thesis also applies to the Chinese experience. Although the Chinese invented many critical intensive technologies during the Eastern Zhou period, the victories and dominance of the Legalism-inspired coercive states allowed Chinese inventors to tilt strongly toward extensive technologies.

During the Age of Total War, not only did armies and their auxiliaries expand greatly but the state and society became increasingly organized. Following the Legalist reforms, bureaucracies with largely civilian functions were established, clear bureaucratic procedures were employed, and selection of officials and promotion were increasingly merit based.³⁵ The state’s taxation system became more sophisticated and efficient, more of production and commerce was placed under state control, and taxation to pay for government expenditures and taxation to maintain the royal fisc were made separate.³⁶ Officials’ actions and performances were monitored by sophisticated mechanisms, including documentation and document control, performance checking, personnel evaluation, and impeachment procedures.³⁷ An independent censorial system was also established, to check the performances of central and local bureaucracies.³⁸ With the augmentation and enhancement of state power, society was increasingly organized in a way that expedited war mobilization and war-related

31. According to some estimates, agricultural productivity during the Warring States period was double that of Western Zhou (G. Li 1999; Zhang 1983). Moreover, Qin’s agricultural yield was about 50 percent higher than the yields of the other six major states (Zhang 1983).

32. See Yang (1998, pp. 42–104) for a survey of numerous technological advances during the Age of Total War.

33. Mann (1986, p. 285).

34. Mann (1986, pp. 284–85).

35. By the Age of Total War, many methods of selecting officials had developed. These included recommendation, self-promotion (by presenting memorials to their ruler or even appealing to him in person), and merit-based selection. Many officials started their careers as the rulers’ bodyguards and gradually moved up (Yang 1999, pp. 219–20).

36. Yang (1998, pp. 236–40).

37. Yates (1995).

38. Hucker (1966) produced an excellent study of the censorial system of Ming China. Even though Hucker was concerned with the late imperial Chinese government, many censorial techniques described in the book had Eastern Zhou origins.

production. In most states families were organized into five-household units for the purposes of record-keeping, mutual surveillance, and collective responsibility.³⁹ The men in these units were either conscripted to fight wars or left at home to support the war efforts by farming or building. In each state that instituted a family registration system, registration was compulsory, and families were regularly subjected to a kind of census, which reported numerical changes due to births and deaths. A collective-responsibility system for each five-family unit was also enforced. A crime committed by one member of a group would be considered a crime of the entire unit if it was not reported and was later found out by the authorities. Society was now organized to resemble the state's military organization.

Beginning late in the phase of the Age of Transition, the building of great walls became current. The great walls differed from earlier city walls in their length and scope. These walls were not built to enclose and protect a small urban area, but to defend a large part of a state's territory, or even an entire state, equivalent in size to one—often more—present-day Chinese provinces. Not only were they a technological innovation, they also signified the transformation of the ancient Chinese states from multicity city-states into territorial states. As examples: to defend its territory from an attack by Qi, Yan built a wall along the length of its southern border, along the Yi River. To defend itself from attack by Chu in the south and Zhao and Wei in the west, Qi constructed the southern great wall, which extended many hundreds of kilometers from the Yellow Sea to the Ji River, close to present-day Pingyin of Shandong province. To defend itself against Wei's acts of aggression, Qin constructed a long wall between the Yellow and Luo Rivers. Zhao, Wei, Chu, and Zhongshan also constructed great walls to defend their territory.⁴⁰ Finally, the major northern states Yan, Zhao, and Qin constructed great walls in the north to keep out the nomads. After the Qin conquest, these northern walls were linked and the unified wall became the predecessor of the present Great Wall.⁴¹

The continued growth of the states' organizational capacity lead to the development of other intensive technologies involving huge amounts of tightly organized labor. Beginning in the later part of the Age of Transition, the major states constructed wider and better roads to ensure quicker movement of troops and resources.⁴² Some states, seeking to improve on the transport system afforded by the natural waterways began constructing long-distance

39. During the Western Zhou and early Eastern Zhou periods soldiers were organized into units of five. A number of these units were then grouped into a single unit led by a chariot (Du 1990, p. 131). The organization of five civilian families into one unit had clear military origins.

40. Bayanchagan (1999); Yang (1998, pp. 323–25).

41. The present Great Wall was constructed during the Ming dynasty, and parts of it are located considerably south of Qin's Great Wall.

42. Shi (1963, pp. 76–81); Yang (1998, pp. 111–15).

canals connecting major rivers for moving soldiers and supplies. They also built large-scale irrigation and water-control projects to increase agricultural productivity.

Ever since the Age of Total War, the development of technologies in China has never stopped, as is amply shown in Needham and his colleagues' multivolume masterpiece on traditional Chinese science and technology.⁴³ Nonetheless, the dominant technological trend in premodern China, and, indeed, the even more splendid achievements following the Qin conquest, was the gradual perfection of extensive technologies. As a measure of a state's capacity to organize itself as well as society, this pattern of development in China is not hard to explain. Most intensive technologies, once invented, are unlikely to be monopolized by states. The development of intensive technologies therefore tends to extend the power of the society as well as the state. Under certain structural conditions, intensive technology development might even lead to the diffusion of political power, as occurred when movable-type printing became available in the West.⁴⁴ Extensive technologies, to the contrary, tend to benefit large-scale organizations, and especially the state. Given a choice, rulers of a traditional society would certainly favor the development of extensive over intensive technologies. They might even use the power they had acquired from extensive technologies to harness or to marginalize the development of intensive technologies, so as to make the society easier to control. In short, the Legalist measures could also be seen as a set of major innovations in extensive technologies.

WARFARE AND LARGE-SCALE WATER PROJECTS

In his famous book *Oriental Despotism*, Wittfogel argues that a centralized bureaucratic state persisted in ancient China largely because the climatic conditions at the time entailed a strong state to organize the construction and maintenance of large-scale water projects for agricultural use.⁴⁵ My research finds no support for this famous argument.⁴⁶ There is an ancient Chinese tale about a sage-king named Yu, who engineered large water projects to benefit the people. But no historical or archaeological evidence indicates that such a person ever existed.⁴⁷ Until the early Shang dynasty, ancient China was still practicing

43. See Ronan and Needham (1978, 1981, 1986, 1994, 1995) for an abridged version of Needham's monumental study of the development of ancient Chinese technology and science.

44. See Censer and Popkin (1987) for the roles of the press and newly emerging public opinion in the origins of the French Revolution, and Eisenstein (2005) for how movable-type printing sparked the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the scientific revolution.

45. Wittfogel (1957).

46. Wittfogel's argument originated from Marx's idea of "the Asiatic mode of production" (Marx 1985, p. 390). It has generated heated debates in the former Soviet Union, China, and the Western academic world (e.g., Bailey and Llobera 1981; Hou 2003, chap. 1).

47. Chang (1983, p. 128).

slash-and-burn agriculture, and evidence of the use of irrigation techniques is lacking.⁴⁸ Neither the received texts nor the archaeological sources for the Western Zhou dynasty contains any record of large-scale water projects.⁴⁹ Only during the Age of Hegemons do water projects—and those small in scale—start to appear.⁵⁰ State-sponsored construction of large-scale water projects did not begin in China until the Age of Transition, after state power had centralized. Therefore, their utility in agriculture could not have brought about China's strong state tradition. Moreover, contrary to Wittfogel's thesis, the earliest large-scale water projects were constructed for war-related purposes. Only during the Age of Total War do large-scale agricultural-oriented water projects start to appear. In other words, Wittfogel's argument has no historical relevance for China. Let us turn to substantiating these assertions.⁵¹

It is common sense that limited transportation capacity has always been a major constraint on ancient warfare.⁵² When water transport is an option, it lowers the costs and increases the range and capacity of military activities. Premodern armies therefore transported men and resources along natural waterways whenever they could. Donald Engels, for instance, estimated that Sargon of Akkad could have tripled his armies' military range by using water transport.⁵³ Qin frequently moved troops and supplies along the Wei River during its wars with Jin. In southern China, where the river networks were denser, the use of natural water routes for military transport was commonplace (see chapter 5), one example being the crucial role that naval warfare played in the Chu-Wu conflict.⁵⁴

48. Chou (1974, p. 27).

49. Hsu and Linduff (1988, p. 172).

50. For example, at an interstate meeting held in 657 BCE, an agreement was reached: "Let there be no damming of irrigation water, no withholding sales of grain" (*Guliang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, Xi 9; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 2396). This clause hints at the existence of some kind of irrigation work in these states. The *Book of Master Huainan* ("Renjianxun 18"; reproduced in Liu 1989, p. 623) also contains a record that Sun Shu'ao, a chief minister under King Zhuang of Chu (r. 613–591 BCE), supervised the construction of a water project to irrigate the land in a place called Siqu. In chapter 4, we illustrated the level of Chu's bureaucratic efficiency by an example of how a city wall was built under Sun Shu'ao's supervision. Chu had constructed many projects under Sun Shu'ao for the purpose of strengthening the state to compete with Jin, its longtime rival. In other words, the water project's agricultural purpose had a clear military orientation.

51. For a detailed history of China's water projects, see Ji (1981); Yao (2005); and Zheng (1939).

52. See Crown (1974); Engels (1978); Graff and Higham (2002, p. 13); and Landels (1980). Bairoch (1988, p. 11) used the phrase "the tyranny of distance" to capture the high cost of transportation in the ancient world.

53. Engels (1978).

54. Wars between Chu and Wu might always have been in part naval. Some of these wars, as recorded in *Zuo's Commentary*, show the roles that the two navies played in battles: In 549 BCE King Kang of Chu led Chu's navy to attack Wu (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1090). In 518 BCE King Ping of Chu attacked Wu with a naval force (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1452). In 504 BCE, Wu defeated the Chu navy and captured Chu's naval commander Pan Zichen, a defeat that motivated Chu to relocate its capital from Ying to Ruoyi (reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1557). It is also recorded that in 525 BCE the Chu navy captured Wu's flagship named *Yuhuang*. Fearing that he would be punished by King Liao of Wu (r. 526–515 BCE), Wu's commander Prince Guang ordered a night attack to recapture the command ship (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1392–93). In 506 BCE, the Wu navy first advanced to Yuzhang by water, then attacked Chu on land. In less than three months the Wu army advanced more than 1,300 kilometers and won a series of battles that almost conquered Chu (reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1542–47).

The available texts indicate that Wu was the first state to construct canals to connect two major rivers, which served as naval “shortcuts.”⁵⁵ Wu dug the Hangou and Heshui canals in 486 and 482 BCE, respectively, for military purposes.⁵⁶

After defeating Chu in 506 BCE and Yue in 494 BCE, Wu shifted its geopolitical interests northward (see chapter 5). King Fuchai of Wu led his army to attack Chen in 489 BCE and Lu in 487 BCE. The expedition against Lu proved difficult. After occupying Wuchen, a peripheral Lu city, the Wu army found itself stalemated and had to propose a peace. Jingbo, a Lu minister, suggested that Duke Ai reject Wu’s proposal on the grounds that Wu could not possibly maintain its supply lines and would have to retreat with or without a treaty. Still fearful of Wu’s military might, however, Duke Ai accepted the peace proposal. But in the end the treaty that was signed did not favor Wu, most likely because Wu’s inability to support an overextended supply line weakened its negotiating position.⁵⁷ A year later in 486 BCE, Wu completed the Hangou Canal. Roughly 200 kilometers long, it linked the Yangzi with the Huai River,⁵⁸ making it possible for Wu’s fleet to sail directly to Qufu, the Lu capital.

Having subdued Lu, Wu proceeded farther north to confront Qi. Thanks to the Hangou Canal, Wu could now send troops and supplies from its base, along the Yangzi River, then the Hangou Canal to the Huai River, and on to the Huai’s tributary the Si River.⁵⁹ In 484 BCE, with the assistance of the now subjugated Lu, Wu defeated the Qi army in the battle at Ailing (chapter 5).⁶⁰ That victory fueled King Fuchai’s ambition. In 483 BCE, he ordered not only the widening of the Hangou Canal but also the Heshui Canal project, to link the Si River with the Ji and Wen Rivers, the latter a tributary of the Si River that penetrated deep into Qi’s territory. The Ji River was also a major waterway; it ran parallel to the Yellow River and into many major states, including Jin. Wu’s construction of the Heshui Canal was, again, not economically motivated. With Qi defeated, Fuchai wanted hegemony over the heart of China, and for this he needed to subdue Jin. At Fuchai’s proposal, Wu and Jin along with many secondary states agreed to an

55. Considering Wu’s long-standing dependence on its naval strength, its pioneering role in long distance canal building is not surprising.

56. Just as for many European states in the nineteenth century a major purpose of developing railway networks was to facilitate the transportation of troops and supplies in times of war or domestic turmoil (Howard 1976, pp. 97–98).

57. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Ai 8, 487 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1648–50).

58. *Zuo’s Commentary* (Ai 9, 486 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1652).

59. After completing the Hangou Canal, Wu immediately attacked Qi at Ailing. In that battle Wu sent its troops and supplies north following the Hangou, the Huai River, and the Si River. There the troops disembarked and marched to the Wen River, where they again took ship and sailed farther north. The route of Wu’s expedition was reconstructed based largely on the account in *Discourses of the States* (“Discourses of Wu”; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, pp. 591–617).

60. Wu had also attacked Qi in 485 BCE via the sea route, but lost the ensuing battle after disembarking on Qi territory (*Zuo’s Commentary*, Ai 10; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 1656).

interstate meeting at Huangchi, located on the bank of the Ji River, in 482 BCE. To compel Jin to accept Wu's hegemony in the interstate system, Fuchai arrived at the meeting with 30,000 warriors.⁶¹

Fuchai's hegemonic dream was shattered by Yue's surprise attack (chapter 5). While Fuchai and his army were away at the Huangchi conference, Yue sacked the Wu capital and later conquered Wu.⁶² But the narrative already reveals the military origins of China's long-distance canal systems.

Once built, however, the long-distance canals would naturally also be used for transporting commercial goods and for irrigation. Wu's construction of the Heshui, for instance, was in many ways what made the city Dingtao (located at the intersection of the Heshui and Ji River) the largest commercial center during the Age of Total War.⁶³ By the Age of Total War more and more large-scale water projects had been constructed for the purposes of irrigation, flood control, and soil improvement. The Zheng Guo Canal, constructed by Qin in 237 BCE, was one such project.⁶⁴ The finished canal irrigated an area of over 40,000 hectares and greatly increased the yield of the Guanzhong region.⁶⁵ Ximen Bao's late fifth century BCE irrigation project is another example. It is recorded that he had supervised the construction of a total of twelve canals in the Ye region, which greatly improved soil quality and irrigation in the entire region.⁶⁶ Perhaps the most ingenious water-control project of the time was Li Bing's Dujiangyan flood control and irrigation project, constructed about the mid-third century BCE, and still in effective use today.⁶⁷

But even canals and other large-scale water projects built for agricultural purposes had war as their primary motive. With the advent of total war (ca. 419 BCE), a state's strategic dominance depended primarily on the size of its adult male population and total extraction capacity. Therefore, improving agricultural productivity became vital to a state's war effort, and consequently agriculturally oriented water projects were widely implemented. By that time, the warring states had become war machines; their major efforts were geared toward war. Large-scale water-control projects in ancient China were clearly products of strong states, not the other way around as Wittfogel has argued.

61. *Discourses of the States* ("Discourses of Wu"; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, p. 608).

62. *Zuo's Commentary* (Ai 13, 482 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1676–77).

63. Shi (1963, pp. 110–11).

64. The Zheng Guo Canal was constructed upon the suggestion made by Zheng Guo, a Han native, to the First Emperor. Zheng Guo's real purpose was to alleviate Qin's military pressure on Han (in favor of the canal project). Even after the First Emperor found this out, he still ordered the canal completed. The project did not delay the pace of Qin conquest. Han was annexed by Qin in 229 BCE, and the completion of the canal greatly increased the agricultural productivity of the Guanzhong Plain (Yang 1998, pp. 62–65).

65. Shi (1963, p. 101).

66. Yang (1998, p. 60).

67. Dujiangyan is a very ingeniously designed artificial levee. For more details on this and other ancient China water projects, see Yao (2005, pp. 35–36, 48–55).

COMMERCE

Commerce had also developed quickly since the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period. The power of merchants reached its zenith during the Age of Total War, then began a gradual decline. The development of market relations in China was closely related to interstate warfare; Eastern Zhou statesmen understood the high cost of war. Sunzi (ca. 544–496 BCE), one of the greatest ancient China military thinkers, advised:

For an army of one thousand four-horse attack chariots, one thousand four-horse leather-covered support wagons, and one hundred thousand armor-clad troops, and for the provisioning of this army over a distance of a thousand *li* (500 kilometers), [you need to prepare for] expenses incurred both at home and in the field, including foreign envoys and advisors, materials such as glue and lacquer, and the maintenance of chariots and armor. *Only when you have in hand one thousand pieces of gold for each day can an army of one hundred thousand be mobilized.*⁶⁸

During the Age of Hegemons, market relations in the various states were still in their infancy. Moreover, most states were still weak and had neither the mindset nor an effective way to control the activities of merchants. It was the high cost of war that compelled many states to adopt some kind of pro-market policy, to generate revenues.⁶⁹ Behind the rise of every major power was an economic policy aimed at enhancing the state's capacity to raise revenues; some of these policies were crucial in facilitating commercial activities.

In *Guanzi*,⁷⁰ for example, there is a story that Duke Huan of Qi wanted to wage wars immediately after becoming duke (685 BCE), but his chief minister, Guan Zhong, advised him to first lower taxes and promote production. *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*) records that after coming to power Duke Wen of Jin immediately “wrote off the old debts, lowered government and military taxes, . . . lowered tariffs for both imports and exports, encouraged commercial activities, and stimulated agricultural production.”⁷¹ Both Qi and Jin thus made themselves stronger by adopting laissez-faire economic policies; other states, also needing more revenue, implemented more active stances. For instance, having been almost conquered by Wu in 494 BCE, King Goujian of Yue then adopted policies that not only encouraged commercial activities, but also used state money to

68. *The Art of War* (2002; italics mine). See Sawyer (1993, p. 159) for the English translation of the text.

69. Du (1996); H. Zhang (2003, pp. 12–18); Zhou, Cao, and Hu (2004).

70. *Guanzi* (“Dakuan 18”; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990, p. 295); a compilation attributed to Guan Zhong (d. 645 BCE); chief minister to Duke Huan of Qi. It is also mentioned in *Discourses of the States* (“Discourses of Qi, Huangong ba zhuhou”; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, p. 247) that Duke Huan of Qi promoted fish and salt trade with Donglai by eliminating tariffs and customs taxes.

71. *Discourses of the States* (“Discourses of Jin 4”; reproduced by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1978, p. 371).

buy and sell various goods in order to regulate the market for the benefit of the producers.⁷² That economic policy quickly strengthened Yue's military, which enabled Yue first to defeat Wu in 482 BCE and then to conquer Wu in 473 BCE (chapter 5).⁷³

Partly due to various states' policies, commercial activities mushroomed during the Age of Transition. One piece of evidence for a booming economy is the expansion of markets in cities. For example, *Zuo's Commentary* indicates that in the city of Linzi, the Qi capital, on at least two occasions rival Qi aristocrats' private armies fought each other in the city's market square.⁷⁴ Since chariots were deployed in the two battles, the fighting could only have taken place in a large, open space. The use of the marketplace as battleground suggests the size of the market itself. Linzi's prosperity is also apparent in another entry in *Zuo's Commentary*,⁷⁵ which records that Duke Jing offered to build a better residence for Yanzi, his chief minister. The duke thought Yanzi's existing residence too noisy and dusty due to its proximity to the market. Yanzi declined the offer, saying, "Since I live very close to the market, I can get whatever I need at any time, so actually I benefit by living so close to the market." Yanzi is certainly portrayed in *Zuo's Commentary* and other sources as a man of wisdom and modesty. A market that is very dusty and noisy, in which a leading aristocrat can find whatever he wants, must have been a very sizable market indeed.

As the economy boomed, merchants, in gaining importance, gained status.⁷⁶ *Zuo's Commentary* carries an entry noting that as early as 627 BCE, Xuan Gao, a Zheng merchant, while on business in Chengzhou, saw the Qin army being mustered in Hua, in preparation for an attack on Zheng.⁷⁷ Xuan Gao immediately used Zheng's state carriage to send his subordinates back to Xinzheng, the Zheng capital, to warn Duke Mu of Zheng (r. 627–606 BCE) of the coming invasion.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, he himself went to the Qin army headquarters. There he presented as gifts on behalf of Duke Mu, four whole oxen skins and twelve oxen, and told them that Zheng would happily supply the Qin army during their stay in Zheng. Thus convinced that Zheng was well prepared for the invasion, the Qin army withdrew. Both initiatives—presenting gifts on Duke Mu's behalf and

72. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of the Money Makers"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3256).

73. The rising importance of the market made the protection of commercial interests part of the agenda of interstate politics. During an interstate meeting in 562 BCE (*Zuo's Commentary*, Xiang 11; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 989–90), the covenant prepared by thirteen states headed by Jin carried the following clause: "All the participant states should not hoard grains for speculation and should not monopolize the use of natural resources."

74. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 28, 545 BCE; Zhao 10, 532 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1148–49, 1316–17).

75. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 3, 539 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1237–38).

76. Both the economy and the merchants benefited considerably from the ubiquity of metal coinage beginning about the mid-Eastern Zhou.

77. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xi 33; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 495).

78. This Qin army consisted of 300 chariots. On its return journey, it was almost completely eliminated by the Jin army ambushed at the Xiaoshan Mountain (see chapter 4).

dispatching Zheng's state carriages to deliver the news to Duke Mu—indicate the high status that Zheng merchants enjoyed.⁷⁹

If in the Age of Hegemons such accounts of merchants' extramercantile activities were still rare, by the time of the Age of Transition more and more prominent merchants were leaving their marks in history. For example, Zigong, Confucius's merchant-disciple, was so rich that on his arrival in another state he would often be received by the duke himself with the highest honor. Zigong's prestige provoked Sima Qian to allege that Confucius had acquired fame in his time to a great extent thanks to the assistance of Zigong's extensive high-echelon networks.⁸⁰ Sima Qian also relates that Fan Li, the chief minister of King Goujian of Yue, after helping Goujian to conquer Wu in 473 BCE, left for Dingtao to start a business, which succeeded so remarkably that in nineteen years "his property three times exceeded a thousand pieces of gold."⁸¹ That Fan Li quit the highest position in officialdom for a career in business seems to suggest that wealth, at that time and place, had superseded high office as a desideratum.

Commerce advanced even further during the Age of Total War. The following quotes from several of ancient China's thinkers attest the extent of commerce, both intra- and interstate. These thinkers' profound understanding of the power of the market, as well as their contemporaries' profit-oriented mentality, also reflects the prevalence of commerce: "Under heaven, every person hustles for proceeds, and bustles for profits."⁸² "A ten thousand-chariot state must have merchants who have ten thousand pieces of gold, and a one thousand-chariot state must have merchants who have one thousand pieces of gold."⁸³ "[In anticipation of] profit, thousands of kilometers are no longer a long distance, . . . a mountain with thousands of knives along the way will be scaled, and a cliff however precipitous will be climbed."⁸⁴ "For higher profits, not even mountains and passes ahead

79. Among the major early Eastern Zhou states, Zheng had a distinctively strong commercial tradition. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 16, 526 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 1378–80) mentions that the Zheng people migrated to their current location and there established a new state under Duke Huan (r. 806–770 BCE). They were accompanied by a group of merchants. The merchants and the Zheng people together cleared the land and initiated the new community. They also sealed a covenant that carried the following stipulation: "The merchants would not betray Zheng people. Zheng people would not force merchants to sell goods to them, nor would they try to obtain their goods through beseeching or seizing. The Zheng people will not interfere with the business of the merchants even if it comprises something highly profitable and precious." The way Zheng began perhaps explains Zheng's strong commercial tradition as well as Zheng's rise to hegemony at the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period (chapter 4).

Zuo's Commentary (Cheng 3, 588 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 816) also relates that a Zheng merchant planned to smuggle Xun Ying, a Jin general captured by Chu, out of Chu by hiding him in one of his merchandise bags. Considering the importance of Xun Ying, to be able to carry out a plan of this nature, this merchant must have had political connections in high places in Chu.

80. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of the Money Makers"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3258).

81. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of the Money Makers"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3257).

82. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of the Money Makers"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3256).

83. *Guanzi* ("Qinzhongjia 80"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990, p. 967). Ancient Chinese writers usually recorded the size of a state by the number of chariots that the state possessed.

84. *Guanzi* ("Jinzang 53"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990, p. 265).

and thieves and bandits along the way will deter people.”⁸⁵ Merchants “compete for money and goods, and show no courtesy. They are bold and courageous, fierce and greedy. Their only god is profit.”⁸⁶

With commerce came business tycoons. Sima Qian mentions quite a few of them: Yi Dun, Guo Zong, Luo, Widow Qing, and Bai Gui.⁸⁷ Yi Dun was a salt merchant, and Guo Zong ran large iron workshops. According to Sima Qian, they were both as rich as emperors and kings. Luo traded with the nomads for their horses and cattle,⁸⁸ and Widow Qing owned and operated a cinnabar mine. They were so rich that even the First Emperor treated them with the highest courtesy. Hanfeizi once compared the power of kings and dukes with the wealth of merchants: “In heaven, the power and authority of kings and dukes. . . . On earth, the wealth of Yi Dun, Tao Zhu, and Pu Zhu.”⁸⁹ Sima Qian wrote in greater detail about the merchant Bai Gui. According to Sima Qian, Bai Gui lived very frugally and treated his workers and servants well. But when he saw business opportunities, he acted as swiftly as a predator that saw prey. Bai Gui compared his business strategies to the strategies of warfare and himself to great generals such as Sunzi and Wu Qi. He summarized the secret of his business success thusly: “I buy products when people do not want them, and I sell them when they are in great demand.” He seems to have had many qualities of a successful modern businessman.

In *Biography of Su Qin*, Sima Qian relates that Su Qin (d. 284 BCE),⁹⁰ one of the most prominent strategists of this time, had a rocky start in his political career. Unable to sell his ideas to the rulers of various states, he returned home empty-handed. At home he was mocked by his family: “According to our Zhou custom, a man ought to devote himself to acquiring estates and to manufacturing and commerce, reaping twenty percent profits [on both]. But you have abandoned the fundamentals to make a living through empty talk. No wonder you have turned out a failure.” This jibe makes plain that, by the Age of Total War, as urban population swelled, most urbanities were no longer in farming but in commerce. Furthermore, whereas the textual traditions tended to record the careers of a few successful political heroes, most ordinary city folk may well have admired not statesmen but money makers. Su Qin’s story reflects well common people’s attitude, which also suggests the extensiveness of market relations at the time.

85. Mozi (“Guiyi 47”; reproduced in Zhang 1988, pp. 425–32).

86. Xunzi (“Rongru 4”; reproduced in Wang 1988, p. 56).

87. *Grand Historian* (“Biographies of the Money Makers”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 3258–60).

88. We are told that the number of livestock Luo owned could only be estimated by the number of valleys that it covered (*Grand Historian*, “Biographies of the Money Makers”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3260).

89. Hanfeizi (“Jielao 20”; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 163). Tao Zhu was another of Fan Li’s names.

90. *Grand Historian* (“Biography of Su Qin”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2241).

The above stories about Su Qin and Fan Li both reveal another transformation of the time—the appearance of commercial cities.⁹¹ Cities or city-states had originated as Western Zhou military garrisons (see chapter 3). During the Eastern Zhou period, numerous city-states were conquered, but many of the cities that had ceased to be capitals did not wither. Instead, with the increase in urban population, the extension of road and canal systems, and the expansion of commercial activities, they developed into commercial centers.⁹² For instance, Dingtao, the place where Fan Li's business flourished, was originally the capital of Cao. In 487 BCE, Cao was annexed by Song. Five years later, Wu completed the Heshui Canal. Dingtao, located on the Ji River side of the Heshui, became the most important depot and trading center for all of ancient China. Obviously, that is why Fan Li chose Dingtao as the site of his business.⁹³

Commerce dominated not only in defunct state capitals but also in still-functioning capitals of the existing states. Chengzhou, where Su Qin was born, was the capital of the Eastern Zhou. Yet by Su Qin's time, it was more a commercial center. Earlier, we tried to gauge the extent of Linzi's early economic activities from the size of the market inside the city. By the Age of Total War, Linzi, the capital of Qi, had developed into a major metropolitan center. This is how Su Qin, in an attempt to persuade King Xuan of Qi to join an allied force against Qin, described Linzi:⁹⁴

Linzi has seventy thousand households. Assuming an average of three male adults in a household, . . . Linzi alone is able to provide 210,000 warriors for Qi. Linzi is also a very prosperous city, enjoyable to live in. Linzi residents are all good at playing the flute, lute and zither, and [the 13-stringed instrument] *zhu*. They also like to watch cockfights and dog races, and to play chess and football. The streets of Linzi are so full of carriages that they often collide, and so crowded with pedestrians that people often rub shoulders. When these people raise their hands their sleeves conceal the sky, and when they wipe off their perspiration their sweat drops down like rain. In Linzi, every household is rich and every person leads a comfortable life.

This account gives us a sense of the scale of the city at the time. It also gives us a glimpse of the preferred leisure activities as well as the degree of prosperity in

91. Moreover, during the Age of Total War, as military garrisons significantly expanded, the resulting huge demand for staples created the military market (Yang 1998, p. 131). Such a market created a mechanism that Mann (1986, pp. 147–48) has called the “military multiplier,” which greatly contributed to the local economy.

92. According to *Grand Historian* (“Biographies of the Money Makers”; 1959, pp. 3253–84), other commercial centers at the time included Li and Yong in Qin; Yang, Pingyang, Wen, Shangdang, Zhongshan, Puyang, and Handan in the Three Jins; Ji in Yan; and Ying, Shouchun, and Wu in Chu.

93. Most of the commercial centers at the time were located close to a major waterway (Shi 1963, pp. 110–30).

94. *Grand Historian* (“Biography of Su Qin”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2257).

Linzi. Like most of the strategists' writings, the account resorts to considerable exaggeration.⁹⁵ Yet the same biography of Su Qin also describes his visit to other states, with a similar degree of exaggeration but in rather different directions. Some degree of prosperity must have existed in Linzi to make such a fantastic account plausible in the first place.⁹⁶

If these accounts of Warring States commerce and prosperity have any basis, the commercial flow at the time must have been very impressive. Nevertheless, although the existing data allows us to access the scope and scale of commercialism from different angles, it is not systematic enough to allow us to construct the actual amount of commercial flow for any major products. Fortunately, though, we have one piece of evidence that reflects the scale of commercial flow at the time. In 1957, a pair of bronze bamboo-shaped containers was unearthed in Shou County in present-day Anhui province. Chinese historians have identified the two objects, called the "Prince E tallies," as a trade permit issued to Prince E by King Huai of Chu (r. 328–299 BCE).⁹⁷ The tallies bear inscriptions that gave the prince the right to trade in over twenty cities across five present-day Chinese provinces.⁹⁸ The inscriptions also state the maximum amount of duty-free goods that the prince's trading band could carry on one trip: no more than fifty wagon loads by land transport and 150 boat loads (or fifty large boat loads) by river transport.⁹⁹ The tallies clearly specify that if the goods were to be transported by animals or humans, the amount of goods that were carried by ten horses/oxen or twenty humans would be counted as a wagon load. For river transport, the tallies also specify that livestock, such as horses, oxen, and sheep, were not allowed on the boats. It is estimated that a large boat, as described in the tallies, had a capacity to carry eighteen metric tons of goods.¹⁰⁰ A trading band of fifty large boats, therefore, was carrying an impressive amount of goods.

We have no idea whether or not Prince E was trading on behalf of King Huai.¹⁰¹ But since trade required a permit, scholars generally assume that the Prince could not have traded just for the king. It needs to be stressed that Chu was not commercially well developed.¹⁰² Of the commercial centers mentioned

95. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Prince Mengchang"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2362–63) also records that during the Age of Total War, the Qi city of Xue, the fief of Prince Mengchang, had about 60,000 households at its peak. Prince Mengchang claimed to have patronized 3,000 *shi*. Many of these *shi* must also have had families, disciples, and servants to care for. The prince would have needed a fief of that size to support such vast patronage. Xue was just one of seventy-plus Qi cities. If Xue had a population of that size, Linzi's 70,000 households may not be an exaggeration at all.

96. Qi's highly developed commerce is also attested by archaeological evidence (Zou 1997, pp. 99–100).

97. Yao (1983).

98. See Huang (1962) and Tan (1962) for an account of the permitted trading regions specified on the tallies.

99. Since Chu had a very abundant river and lake network, the trade routes specified on the tallies were mostly along rivers. There was only one land trade route, designated to transport goods between places far from Chu's major river networks (Huang 1962, p. 157).

100. Liu (1995, p. 138).

101. Peters (1999, p. 112).

102. Du (1996); Shi (1963).

in the *Biographies of Money Makers* and other ancient Chinese sources, only a few were Chu cities.¹⁰³ Sima Qian even specifically commented that “to the south of Huai River and Yangzi River, few people died from coldness and hunger, but meanwhile few families had properties that reached a thousand pieces of gold.” Yet a set of tallies from a supposedly less commercially developed state reveals a high level of the commercialism of the time.

WEAKNESSES OF ANCIENT CHINA’S ECONOMIC ACTORS

Commerce faced serious challenges during the Age of Total War. The attack on commerce did not come from early Confucian—or Daoist-inclined—scholars or from persons who placed certain “values” above instrumental calculations. Neither Confucian nor Daoist-inclined scholars had a clear anti-commerce program at this stage.¹⁰⁴ Scholars of both persuasions were more concerned with problems caused by wars and the changing nature of politics than with the problems associated with the advent of commerce. Confucius himself seemed undisturbed that Zigong, one of his closest disciples, was a successful merchant.¹⁰⁵ Quite ironically, the immediate challenges to market relations were from those who upheld the more publicly oriented instrumental Legalist philosophy for a highly instrumental reason, commercialism, which by promoting privately oriented instrumental rationality, would lead to a militarily weak state.

Neither the Legalists nor the Warring States rulers had any intention of wiping out private businesses, as the Chinese Communists did during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Even the First Emperor, who no doubt placed control of the whole society far above anything else, treated successful business tycoons, such as Luo and Widow Qing, with great respect.¹⁰⁶ The Legalists’ and the Legalism-informed rulers’ attitudes toward merchants were businesslike and opportunistic: although they opposed commerce in general, they tolerated or even supported those loyal subjects (such as Luo and Widow Qing) who were

103. *Grand Historian* (“Biographies of the Money Makers”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 3253–84). See also Shi (1963, pp. 122–23), which discusses the locations of cities of major commercial importance as well as the chief products of various regions.

104. Chinese merchants were further marginalized, however, during the Western Han dynasty, when imperial Confucianism added anti-market values to the Legalist anti-market doctrines (see chapter 10).

105. According to Chou (1974, pp. 33–35), Confucius never despised merchants even though he sought to limit human wants, particularly the wants of the rulers, and Mencius’s view of commercial activities was more positive than Confucius’s.

106. These two instances by no means reflect the First Emperor’s typical attitude toward merchants. As pointed out by a number of scholars, both Luo and Widow Qing were doing business in remote areas that were not always within the reach of Qin’s authority (Cui 2002; He 1990). Moreover, Luo traded Chinese goods to the nomads in exchange for horses and oxen. The livestock that Luo bought was vital for Qin’s military (horses) and agriculture (oxen). The cinnabar from Widow Qing’s mine was important for the production of mercury, dyes, inks, and other crucial products. Mercury had a particular importance at the time because, among other uses, it was believed by yin-yang scholars to prolong life, and the First Emperor was obsessed with his own longevity, if not immortality.

involved in types of businesses seen by the rulers as beneficial. Others might be persecuted.¹⁰⁷ During the Age of Total War, the intention of even the most Legalist Qin rulers was not to eliminate the market, but to create an environment that promoted agricultural production and set a limit on money-making activities. This is apparent not only in the ways Qin rulers were portrayed in ancient China's received texts, but also in the Qin legal documents unearthed at Shuihudi (discussed earlier). Significant portions of these documents deal with the management and control of agricultural production. Moreover, although the unearthed legal documents do not specify rates of taxation for commercial activities, those legal codes that concern commerce unmistakably show the Qin state's discrimination against it, in the spirit of Legalist principles.¹⁰⁸ Following are two examples. The documents specify that "farmers are prohibited from selling wines," even though wine drinking and production for private use were allowed.¹⁰⁹ The documents also contain a legal stipulation requiring that anyone who owes money to the state and is unable to pay it provide corvée service for the state instead, though he may supply a substitute of similar age. It further stipulates, however, that if the debtor is a handicraft workshop owner or merchant, he must work as a corvée laborer himself, with no replacement allowed.¹¹⁰ A clear discrimination against money makers appear in both instances.

Legalists more or less believed that thriving commerce would lead to a militarily weak state. Their logic was based on related considerations: First, agricultural products contributed more than commercial taxes to a state's war effort. *Guanzi* puts it very clearly: "If most people are farmers, the land is cultivated. If the land is cultivated, more grains are produced. If more grains are produced, the state is rich. A rich state produces a strong military, a strong military leads to victory, and victory brings more land . . . If a state abandons the foundation and promotes nonessentials, the land will be uncultivated and the state will be weak."¹¹¹ Here, the "foundation" is mainly agricultural production, and "nonessentials" are commercial activities. To be clear, *Guanzi* is not an anti-commerce manifesto, and this highly eclectic collection also contains articles that understand the role of the market in creating wealth for a state. Nevertheless, the kind of Legalist thinking expressed in the above quotation not only captures the main thrust of the *Guanzi* compilers; it also became conventional wisdom in premodern China.

107. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of the Money Makers"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3277) records that Zhuo was a very rich merchant in Zhao, but after Qin conquered Zhao, all his property was confiscated, and he and his wife were forced to move to a remote area. The same passage mentions a similar fate for several other successful merchants after their home states were conquered by Qin.

108. S. Yang (2003, pp. 152–57).

109. For the law that prohibited the sale of wines, see *Shuihudi qinmu zhujian* (1978, p. 30). See page 41 of that book for evidence that wine production and private consumption were allowed.

110. *Shuihudi qinmu zhujian* (1978, pp. 84–85).

111. *Guanzi* ("Zhiguo 48"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990, p. 598).

Second, farming makes for a settled population, whose men are easy to control and can be turned into more obedient and reliable warriors. This view is very clearly expressed in the following quotation from *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Lushi Chunqiu*):¹¹² "If people abandon the foundation by working on nonessentials, it will be harder for a state to command the people. When a state cannot command the people, the state cannot fight well and defend itself. If people abandon the foundation to work on nonessentials, they will have less [immovable] property. When people have less [immovable] property, they are more likely to migrate and less likely to be loyal when the state is facing a threat. If people abandon the foundation by working on nonessentials, they will become shrewder, knowing how to be deceptive and to manipulate the legal codes."¹¹³

Third, agricultural production and business activities are incompatible. In order to promote agricultural production, business activities must be curtailed. For instance, Legalist-inclined scholars believed that interest rates for loans tended to be so high that farmers who borrowed money would very likely go bankrupt if anything went wrong with the crop.¹¹⁴ They also insisted that the higher profits of business activities would draw people away from farming. Shang Yang explained: "Farmers work hard but earn little. In profitability, farming is in no way comparable with business."¹¹⁵ If commerce is not checked, "people will inevitably turn away from farming."¹¹⁶ Therefore, "if we want to strengthen the state by promoting agriculture, we must raise the prices of domestic food products and must increase the nonagricultural and commercial taxes."¹¹⁷

Finally, the Legalist-inclined scholars wanted a society in which the state was the only powerful actor. They certainly did not want a strong business class that could defend its interests. Legalists were concerned that rich merchants would use their money to buy offices.¹¹⁸ Sima Qian once commented that "those who had a thousand pieces of gold in hand were less likely to be sentenced to death."¹¹⁹ Legalists saw this as a serious threat to the state power. The goal of the Legalists'

112. *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* ("Shangnong"; reproduced in Zhang et al. 2007, pp. 279–88) is not a Legalist treatise but an eclectic text compiled for the purpose of synthesis. The passage that I have cited, however, clearly expresses Legalist principles.

113. *Hanfeizi* ("Wangzheng 15"; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 112) argues similarly that "a state would very likely be annexed if people who were under the family registration system were very poor but temporary guests were rich, or if farmers and warriors were poor but merchants were rich."

114. According to *Guanzi* ("Qinzhong din 83"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990, pp. 1002–3), in the state of Qi, the annual interest rates for monetary loans were 20 percent in the north and 50 percent in the south.

115. *Book of Lord Shang* ("Wainai 22"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 2003, p. 145).

116. *Book of Lord Shang* ("Nongzhan 3"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 2003, p. 9).

117. *Book of Lord Shang* ("Wainai 22"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 2003, p. 145).

118. *Hanfeizi* ("Wudu 49"; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 455) argued that "[t]hese days, it is very common that those who are close to the king frequently ask the king for favors on behalf of other people. Official positions can, therefore, be bought. As long as money can buy an official position, the status of merchants cannot be reduced."

119. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of the Money Makers"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3256).

economic policy is therefore sufficiently clear: marginalize the merchants in order to effectively cage the people in the fields to produce and in the army to fight.

Earlier in this chapter, I asserted that rulers have three ideal-typical methods for compelling their followers to fight under their banners: to pay them, to convince them that they are fighting for “their own causes,” and to coerce them into fighting and reward those who fought well. I also asserted that the Legalist measures implemented by Shang Yang were very close to the last of the three methods. Our analysis of the Legalists’ economic policy confirms this from another angle. It should be noted, however, that dislike and distrust of money makers likewise characterized traditional institutions in premodern Europe, including both the churches and the states. How was it that the ancient Chinese state was able to successfully harness the rising tides of commerce, whereas in Europe both the state elite and the clergies could do little against commercialism in the cities?¹²⁰

It was a question of timing, primarily: whether powerful moneyed classes and commercial cities appeared before or after state centralization. In ancient China, as described earlier, commerce developed as an immediate consequence of the state development impelled by war. The merchants as a group *never* constituted a powerful actor, with ideological, military, and political means to justify and defend their interests, and the states never relied on commercial wealth to finance their wars, as they did in Western Europe. In Europe, although towns during the early Middle Ages were either the administrative seat of the bishop or the military headquarters of the lord, by late in the High Middle Ages, or before wars lent momentum to the state-building process, some of the most important European cities had already evolved into commercial centers and constituted a vital part of Europe’s economic as well as political life (see chapter 5). They were, as Finer commented,¹²¹ “trading and manufacturing centres, their inhabitants were freemen, their governments were communal and conciliar, and their relationship to their traditional lords or kings ran the gamut from strictly controlled and chartered liberties to complete independence. . . . The independent cities revived an ancient form: they were republics.”

The difference in timing contributed to the completely different relationships between the state and the money makers of the East and the West. In early modern Europe, when competition among states shifted into higher gear, the wealth of the cities made “even the mightiest European command structures” depend “on an international money and credit market for organizing military and other major undertakings.”¹²² As a result, in Europe, the patrimonial warfare common during medieval times was transformed into mercenary warfare (roughly between 1400 and 1700 CE), which further strengthened the power of

120. McNeill (1982, p. 115).

121. Finer (1997, p. 894).

122. McNeill (1982, p. 115).

the cities and the bourgeoisie. In China, where independent cities did not exist, states never needed to negotiate with merchants for the money to finance their wars. In the Age of Total War in China, cities, especially commercial centers such as Dingtao, were only prizes that the warring states were fighting for.¹²³ The weakness of the ancient Chinese merchant class also enabled the states to adopt policies that undermined merchant power and wealth without much resistance, and to rely largely on the peasant population for supplying manpower and resources for the war. In Europe, between patrimonial and nationalist modes of war came the widespread use of mercenaries. In China, the hegemonic wars (in some ways similar to European patrimonial wars), typical of the early to mid-Eastern Zhou periods, were directly succeeded by total war (similar to European “nationalist” wars); there was no mercenary stage.¹²⁴ In other words, mercenary warfare in early modern Europe contributed to the power of the cities and the bourgeoisie; the absence of such a stage in Eastern Zhou warfare favored the power of the state.

In Europe, when the states turned increasingly powerful in the process of fighting wars, they were met with strong resistance from the bourgeoisie on both ideological and political grounds, as embodied in the concepts of “the natural law,” “limited government,” “the social contract,” “no taxation without representation,” “liberty,” and “civil society.” Resistance eventually took the form of bourgeois revolutions and waves of democratization. In ancient China, the state-building process triggered by military competition was met with little effective ideological or political resistance. Ideologically, even though the Daoists favored noninterventionist policies, and Confucians preached a moral government, no school of thought created ideologies promoting the power of non-state actors. Nor were commercial cities administrated by merchants. Unlike their counterparts in early modern Europe, ancient China’s merchants never existed simultaneously as political, military, and ideological actors. Although they also accumulated an extraordinary amount of wealth, they were feeble against the growing power of the states. When rapid state-building started in Europe after the fifteenth century, the major contenders of state actors were the bourgeoisie, high clergy, and aristocrats.¹²⁵ But when the Legalist measures

123. Dingtao’s economic importance made it such a prize. According to Yang (1998, pp. 129–30), Qi’s major purpose in conquering Song in 286 BCE was to possess Dingtao. Soon after, Qin attacked Qi, largely to obtain Dingtao. Again in 257 BCE, when Qin faced a setback in its military confrontation with Wei and Zhao, Wei captured Dingtao. At one time, even Zhao wanted Dingtao. It is noteworthy that when Qin occupied Dingtao, the city was bestowed as a fief on Wei Ran, Qin’s one-time chief minister and the younger brother of Empress Dowager Xuan. *Grand Historian* (“Biography of Duke Rang”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2323–25) states that when Wei Ran owned Dingtao, he was richer than the king.

124. Howard (1976); Tilly (1992). Here, I borrow Tilly’s (1992) mostly chronological categories of European warfare during the second millennium: patrimonial, mercenary, nationalist, and specialization.

125. See chapter 6 for the roles of high clergy and aristocrats in political development in the European Middle Ages and premodern times. It can be found in the analysis of the social conditions leading to the political dominance of Legalism during the Age of Total War.

began to dominate in the Eastern Zhou period, the aristocracy presented the only major opposition.¹²⁶ During the Age of Total War, there was not a trace of organized resistance by the merchants to Legalist policies harmful to their long-term interests.

This is not to say that merchants in ancient China never tried to become politically relevant. But Chinese merchants never constituted an organized force largely independent of the state; only as individuals did some of them seek and attain influence or even wield outright power. Zigong, the rich merchant and disciple of Confucius, for instance, frequently mingled with dukes and politicians of various states on a fairly equal basis. But our most prominent example is Lü Buwei (d. 235 BCE), whose ascent and fall exemplify the possibilities for and limitations on ambitious merchants of ancient China. *Grand Historians* records that Lü,¹²⁷ having become very wealthy, thought that investing money in state politics was much more profitable than investing money in any kind of business. Therefore, while in the state of Zhao, Lü tried to befriend Zichu, a Qin prince who was then a hostage in Zhao. Zichu was one of the sons of Lord Anguo, son of King Zhaoxiang of Qin (r. 306–251 BCE). Potentially, Zichu could one day become king of Qin. But Zichu was in the middle of the birth order among Lord Anguo's some twenty sons, and he did not even enjoy his father's favor (that was why he was sent to Zhao as a hostage). Still, Lü used his money to bribe his way into the Qin court and convince Lord Anguo to select Zichu as his heir apparent. When Zichu was enthroned (as King Zhuangxiang, r. 249–247 BCE), Lü immediately became a crucial figure in the Qin court. At the time of King Zhuangxiang's premature death, his heir apparent, the future First Emperor, was only thirteen.¹²⁸ Therefore, Lü was able to dominate Qin politics for the next ten years. During that decade, many merchants went to Lü for protection and for government posts. Thus, merchants in Qin for a time wielded enormous political power not outside but within the government. This created a zero-sum conflict between the throne and those powerful merchants—a situation that only invited a showdown. When the First Emperor reached adulthood, conflicts intensified between Lü Buwei and Lao Ai, on one side, and the First Emperor on the other.¹²⁹ In the end, the First Emperor crushed a rebellion instigated by Lao Ai in 237 BCE. As Lao Ai's early patron, Lü was also forced to commit suicide in 235 BCE, and thereafter merchants lost their influence in Qin politics. It becomes immediately clear that whereas the bargaining relationship between

126. Some leading figures of the Legalist reforms, such as Shang Yang in Qin and Wu Qi in Chu, were either assassinated or executed as the result of aristocratic resistance to the reforms.

127. In "Biography of Lü Buwei" (1959, vol. 85, pp. 2505–14).

128. After the unification of China in 221 BCE, the First Emperor thought that the title "king" no longer matched his power and achievement. To proclaim his supreme power he adopted the title *Huangdi* (translated as "Emperor"). He called himself the *First* Emperor out of the wish that his heirs would reign for endless generations.

129. According to Zhou (1999, pp. 163–69), many merchants went to Qin after Lü became very powerful. Lao Ai was one of them.

the commercial cities and the states in Europe had made compromises possible, the Qin arrangement of merchants within the state government created a structure of zero-sum conflict between the state and moneyed men. In the end, the development of the nation-state and market went hand in hand in early modern Europe, whereas state power subjugated merchants politically and also socially in Eastern Zhou China.

SUMMARY

This chapter asserts that, theoretically, political actors have three ideal-typical ways of mobilizing their followers to fight: to pay them, to convince them that they are fighting for their own cause, or to coerce them into fighting and reward those who fight well. Which of the three becomes a state's dominant mode of military mobilization depends on the nature of that state and its relationship with the society. A state's mode of mobilization will further shape the patterns of development of that state, its society, and the relationships between the state and society. In general, a weak state with enough money tends to rely on the first strategy, which further weakens that state. The second mobilization strategy can become dominant in states with a variety of strengths; the dominance of this strategy will boost state power and coalesce the identity of the people being mobilized. Only an extremely strong and autonomous state can employ the last-mentioned mobilization strategy; in turn, this strategy further enhances state power at the expense of societal forces.

The military mobilization strategy adopted by the ancient Chinese states during the Age of Total War was very close to the last-mentioned of the three ideal types. It was totally unattainable in the early modern European states but readily accessible to the ancient Chinese states for a very simple reason: state power was limited in Europe by dynamic checks and balances among the king, aristocracy, high clergy, and urban bourgeoisie, whereas it was augmented in ancient China by the collapse of aristocratic power amid the feudal crisis, leaving the state's rulers as the only powerful political actor.

Empirically, this chapter shows that military competition in conjunction with the feudal crisis prompted the state of Wei to initiate Legalist reforms. Wei's military dominance thereafter compelled the other states to learn from it, triggering waves of isomorphic changes. The Legalist reforms greatly expanded a state's power, giving it tighter control of the society and the ability to extract more resources for warfare. The reforms also made possible large-scale water projects for enhancing transportation and agricultural production, also for the purposes of war. Finally, the rise of state power after Legalism took hold fostered quick development of extensive technologies, that is, inventions aimed at extracting more output from more coordinated and organized inputs. That capacity placed

a lid on the booming market economy, thereby firmly subordinating it to political forces. State dominance permitted the organization of the whole society into a war machine, which in turn made possible wars that lasted for years and inducted a large proportion of a state's adult male population. It was this kind of total war that permitted Qin's conquest of China, to which we now turn.

In the Age of Total War: Qin and the Drive toward Unification

In the last two chapters we discussed how warfare and political-economic transformations interacted in ways that promoted Legalistic thinking and marginalized the rest of ancient China's philosophies in the political realm. This interaction also facilitated the rise of full-fledged government bureaucracies, curbed the rising power of merchants, and greatly strengthened state capacity to control the local population and extract from it resources for warfare. By the mid-fourth century BCE, when the major wave of Legalist reform was tapering off in all the warring states, some states had already turned themselves into war machines, able to wage a new kind of warfare—total war. Wars could last for years, and a large proportion of a state's adult male population and resources were deployed, either in the battles or to build support infrastructure and defensive apparatuses. Territorial expansion became the most important purpose of war, and the death toll was horrific. Ancient China increasingly became a stage too small for more than one state.

This chapter focuses on interstate relations and the military particulars that led to unification and discusses why it was Qin rather than another state that won out. Following an analysis of the military strengths of each of the five great powers during the Age of Total War, it analyzes the geopolitical conditions and interstate relations leading to Qin's final victory in 221 BCE, examining (1) Wei's military activities at the time of its dominance and reasons for its decline; (2) briefly, why the states Qi, Chu, or Zhao could not achieve dominance after Wei's decline; (3) how interstate relations changed during the Eastern Zhou era, the major differences between Eastern Zhou interstate relations and early modern European international relations, and how the Chinese case contributed to the rise of a unified empire in ancient China; and (4) the major steps leading to Qin's final success.

THE GREAT POWERS IN THE AGE OF TOTAL WAR

Early in the Age of Total War, some ten states had enough military muscle to remain serious contenders in the winner-takes-all competition: Qin, Qi, Chu,

Wei, Zhao, Han, Yan, Song, Zhongshan, and Yiqu. Historians consider the first seven of these to have been the most powerful, acknowledging that Han's and Yan's military strength was considerably less than that of the other five states. My war data show that, during the Age of Total War, Qin initiated 106 military conflicts, followed by Wei (33), Zhao (25), Qi (22), Chu (7), Yan (2), and Han (0).¹ These data largely confirm the accounts of China historians. Figure 8.1 shows the territories of the major states in about 350 BCE, but throughout the Age of Total War the territories of these states were constantly changing.

Traditional Chinese historiography has provided a picture of interstate relations in the Age of Total War centered on the dominant contenders. Here is a summary of that. Interstate politics was initially dominated by Wei; after Wei's decline in the mid-fourth century BCE, both Qin and Qi rose to become superpowers in their respective regions.² The weakening of Qi in 301 or 284 BCE (depending on how one calculates) left Zhao a formidable power standing in the way of Qin; it was only after 260 BCE, when Qin finally defeated Zhao in the war of Changping, that Qin's success became inevitable. The state of Chu, by far the largest in territory and manpower, had always had the potential to become a formidable military force, but it never realized this potential.

This account is not unfounded. But historians have arrived at this picture based largely on the depictions of the history of each individual state in the received texts rather than on the comparative data, and conclusions thus arrived at can hardly help being biased. Our war data reveal a much simpler contour of interstate relations: the entire Age of Total War was actually dominated only by two states—Wei and Qin. Wei dominated interstate politics roughly between 419 BCE and mid-fourth century BCE. After that, although Qi, Zhao, and Chu each had a formidable military capacity and achieved some successes, none was Qin's equal militarily, leaving Qin the sole superpower after the decline of Wei.

Qin had initiated far more military conflicts during the period than all the other great powers combined. A closer look at the patterns of warfare at the time shows that it can be divided into two periods. Between 419 and 365 BCE, a total of forty-five wars were fought among the major states; of these, Wei initiated twenty, followed by Qin (9), Zhao (7), Qi (5), Chu (3), and Yan (1).³ Qin was mostly on

1. Following the convention established earlier, in a war waged by several states allied as aggressors, I count only the instigating state as the aggressor.

2. Wang Zhimin (1993, pp. 252–58) asserts that the reigns of King Wei (r. 358–320 BCE), King Xuan (r. 319–301 BCE), and King Min (r. 300–284 BCE) were Qi's golden age. Xu, Si, and Yang (1995, p. 938) identify the reigns of King Wei and King Xuan as Qi's golden age. It was only after Yan fatally defeated Qi in 284 BCE that it finally lost the chance to conquer China. Yang Kuan (1998, p. 380) adds Zhao to Qin and Qi as the three strongest states after the decline of Wei. These views are prevalent among historians.

3. Zhao was assisted by Wei and Han in two battles against Qi: in 404 BCE (the Three Jin troops attacked Qi and broke its great wall defense system), and in 380 BCE (the Three Jin troops went to the rescue of Yan and defeated Qi at Sangqiu).

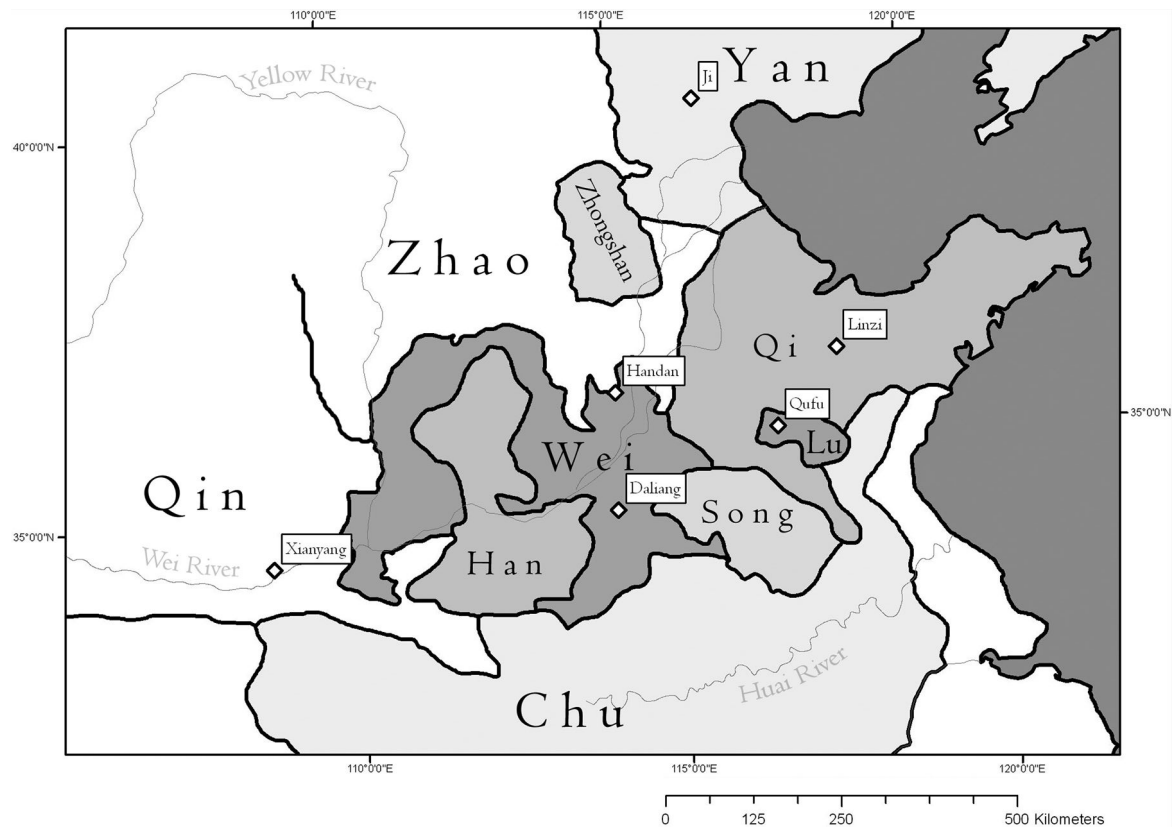


FIGURE 8.1. Territories of the major states about 350 BCE. Throughout the Age of Total War, these state boundaries changed frequently

the defensive during this time. It was repeatedly defeated by Wei, and lost all its territory between the Yellow and Luo Rivers. Even when Qin mounted counterattacks against Wei they were largely ineffective.⁴ Wei established itself as an obvious dominant player during the first half century of the Age of Total War.

Even so, Wei's military superiority was far from comparable with that enjoyed by Qin after Wei's decline. Between 419 and 364 BCE, the other six major powers initiated a total of twenty-five clashes, of which seventeen (68%) were against Wei, indicating that Wei had not managed to completely subdue the other great powers. Wei's military was weakened by its severe defeat by Qin in the battle of Longmen in 364 BCE, though it remained strong enough to attack other states in succeeding years. Wei's dominance did not end until it was sharply defeated twice, in wars involving multiple states, in 353 BCE and 341 BCE. Wei's decline is evident in the huge drop in the number of wars that it later waged against the other major states: Wei initiated only seven wars between 340 and 225 BCE,⁵ down from the twenty it had waged between 419 and 365 BCE, a much shorter period.

Qi made a decisive contribution to Wei's defeat in the battles in 353 BCE and 341 BCE, and its reputation among the warring states soared. *Grand Historian* comments: "Qi rose to be the strongest state [after the battles]. It proclaimed kingship and gave orders to the world."⁶ Modern scholars are convinced that Qi and Qin were both superpowers after Wei's decline. Hui (2005, pp. 63–64), for example, bases her analysis of warring states interrelations on this conventional wisdom:

With the assistance of a famous military strategist, Sun Bin, Qi devastated Wei in two major clashes and seized the hegemony in 341 BC. The succeeding rulers King Huan (319–301 BC)⁷ and King Min (300–284 BC) were eager to exploit Qi's hegemonic status and sought further territorial expansion. In 314 BC, Qi attacked Yan, a medium-sized neighbor in its northwest, and turned it into a dependent. Qi also defeated other great powers: Chu in 303–302 BC and Qin in 298–296 BC. Qi reached the height of its relative capability in 286 BC, when it conquered Song; that conquest allowed Qi to expand its territorial size by 50 percent and to take over the prosperous capital city, Dingtao. In the same year, Qi launched additional attacks on Chu, Han, Wei, and Zhao.

4. Qin attacked Wei in 419, 417, 401, 390, and 389 BCE. For the last battle, Qin reportedly deployed a half million warriors but was defeated by a Wei army of only 50,000 warriors.

5. Wei was annexed by Qin in 225 BCE.

6. *Grand Historian* ("History of Tian Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959). This sentence appears in Sima Qian's narrative after he mentions the Battle of Guiling in 353 BCE. But, Qi did not actually proclaim kingship until 334 BCE, seven years after the Battle of Maling. Before 334 BCE, Zhou and Chu were the only states to claim kingship; the other states remained, nominally, dukedoms. Qi's claim could be seen as a sign of the complete collapse of the Zhou political order, which gave it symbolic significance.

7. This should be King Xuan, not King Huan.

This description of interstate relations after 341 BCE, however, needs to be modified. Let us return to the war data. Between 340 and 285 BCE, when Qi was supposedly sharing superpower status with Qin,⁸ Qin launched thirty-nine clashes. Distant runners-up were Qi (11), Chu (3), Wei (3), and Zhao (2). Notwithstanding that Qi's military performance was stronger than usual, it hardly enabled Qi to challenge Qin's indisputable sole superpower status. Our conclusion stands when the military strength of the two states is compared based on the other indices as well. In this period, Qin waged a total of seven major campaigns during which a reported 530,000 enemy soldiers were slaughtered by the Qin army, while Qi waged only two major wars, during which 120,000 enemy soldiers were killed (100,000 of the casualties were from the militarily weak state of Yan). Analyzing the war data more closely, we can see that of the eleven clashes begun by Qi, in nine of them (including the two major wars mentioned earlier), Qi was aided by two or more states. By contrast, Qin fought alone in almost all of the thirty-nine military conflicts it initiated. By any measure, Qi's military capabilities do not compare with those of Qin after the decline of Wei. Qin's sole superpower status defined the nature of interstate politics after 340 BCE.

My war data also shed light on the geopolitical situation between 340 and 285 BCE. Qin had become an increasing threat, first to Wei and Han, then to Chu, and finally to Zhao. It fought sixteen battles against Wei, ten against Han, seven against Chu, four against Zhao, but only two against Qi. This period can also be divided into two phases. Between 340 and 319 BCE, Qin's major objective was to subdue Wei. Out of a total of ten encounters, seven were against Wei, two against Han, and one (a minor incursion) against Qi. Zhao remained an enemy of Wei and, to that extent, an ally of Qin. Chu was somewhat detached from these wars and still free from Qin's direct attacks.⁹ Qi faced almost no pressure from Qin because of the distance between them. Wei and Han, being much closer to Qin, needed to ally with Qi to resist Qin's military pressure. Not even the Qi-Wei-Han alliance, however, could stop Qin. Wei suffered several major defeats as the Qin army slowly encroached on Wei's and Han's territories and advanced eastward. In 318 BCE, to relieve the increasing pressure from Qin, the states of Zhao, Wei, Han, Chu, Yan, and Qi organized an expedition against Qin. But the alliance was halfhearted. Qi did not commit any troops. Chu and Yan had not yet suffered any direct attacks by Qin, and were therefore not particularly enthusiastic about the campaign. The allies' army in the end consisted mainly of troops from Wei, Han,

8. I stopped the count at 285 BCE because Qi was severely defeated by Yan in 284 BCE and was thereafter unable to regain its former military strength. Some Chinese historians believe that Qi dominated interstate politics only between 340 and 301 BCE. During this period, Qin launched a total of twenty-five wars against the major powers, a figure again only distantly approached by Qi (8), Chu (3), Wei (2), and Zhao (1). Obviously, changing the time frame of the analysis will not alter my overall conclusion.

9. In this period, Chu assaulted Wei and Qi once each and was attacked by Wei once in return.

and Zhao (the Three Jins), and it was defeated by Qin in a war that reportedly cost it 82,000 soldiers.

The allies' expedition provoked Qin to seek revenge. In 314 BCE and again in 310 BCE, Qin attacked Yiqu, a medium-sized state of pastoral origins located north of Qin, to punish it for offering assistance to the expedition. Between 316 BCE and 313 BCE, it also launched three victorious campaigns against Zhao. By 313 BCE, Wei, Han, and Zhao had submitted to Qin.

Thenceforth, interstate politics alternated between two themes. The first, *vertical alliance* in which all the weak states (Qi included) tried to unite against Qin; the second, *horizontal alliance*, in which Qin attempted to break the vertical alliance and woo some of the weak states to its side. For reasons explained in the next section, such interstate maneuverings were in the end only to Qin's advantage. Meanwhile, in 316 BCE, Qin sent troops into modern-day Sichuan and conquered two major states in that region (Ba and Shu). This is the move that proved to be vitally important to Qin's later conquests. Not only had the Sichuan region been developed as a grain basket, now Qin could deliver troops and supplies down the Yangzi River to attack Chu from behind.¹⁰

Being far from Qin, Qi did not take Qin's military threat as seriously as did the other states. Instead, it often exploited its geopolitical advantage locally, coming to dominate Yan and conquering Song. Qi's annexation of Song in 286 BCE provoked retaliation from other states. Zhao attacked Qi in the same year. Qin attacked Qi the following year and sacked nine Qi cities. Finally, in 284 BCE, Yue Yi, a famous Yan general, commanded an allied army of all the major states and invaded Qi. All the allied troops returned home after Qi was defeated, but the Yan army under Yue Yi remained, sacking all but two of Qi's seventy-plus cities.¹¹ Qi in the end survived the assault, but was never able to regain its former strength.

THE DECLINE OF WEI

The previous section asserted that Wei and Qin were the only two states that actually dominated during the Age of Total War, Wei before and Qin after the mid-fourth century BCE. What led to Wei's decline? The conventional wisdom attributes the decline of Wei to a number of conditions and situations, including the incompetence of Wei's rulers after the reign of Duke Wen (r. 445–396 BCE) and the incompetence of Wei's generals, especially Pang Juan, in comparison with Sun Bin, Qi's military strategist. While these could have all been partial causes of Wei's decline, I would argue that its decline was largely the result of two

10. Sage (1992, pp. 122–23); Yang (1998, p. 355).

11. Wang (2001, p. 112).

factors—Wei's poor geopolitical position and its failure to keep Zhao and Han in the Three Jin alliance.

Of the five most powerful warring states, Qin was located in the west; Chu, the south; Qi, the east; and Zhao, the north. Wei was in the middle, and its geopolitical weakness was apparent at the beginning of the Age of Total War. In 413 BCE, as Wei attacked Qin at Zhengxia, Chu took the opportunity to invade Wei from the south, and Qi assaulted Wei from the east. This pattern continued until Wei's final decline, yielding the war network pattern shown in figure 8.2. Between 419 and 365 BCE, Wei is at the very center of the war network, attacking outward in all directions. Its twenty attacks were divided evenly among its targets: Qin (5), Qi (4), Chu (4), Zhao (5). (Han was attacked by Wei once in this period.) Retaliating were Qin (7), Qi (4), Zhao (4), and Chu (2). Between 419 and 365 BCE, Wei was the only major state that had to fight all four great powers to maintain its dominance.

Wei's initial focus was westward, where successful campaigns between 419 and 408 BCE allowed it to occupy Qin's territory between the Yellow and Luo Rivers, prompting Qin to construct an extensive defensive system along the Luo River.¹² Perhaps to secure its northern frontier, Wei also spent three years, beginning in 408 BCE, conquering Zhongshan, which it annexed in 405 BCE. Then, to punish Chu and Qi for their earlier aggression, the Three Jin troops, led by Wei, crushed the Qi army in 405 BCE, reportedly killing about 30,000 Qi soldiers.¹³ Wei followed this victory by defeating Chu at Shengqiu (400 BCE) and Daliang (391 BCE). Because the Three Jins were still united, Wei's geopolitical weakness had not yet become a problem. After 386 BCE, Wei's alliance with Zhao and Han started to crack, however, and Wei fought ten wars with its two former allies. It was only when the Three Jins fought as one that they were able to fight and win wars on multiple fronts simultaneously.

The rupture began in 386 BCE after Wei tried to intervene in Zhao's succession crisis. When Duke Lie of Zhao (r. 408–400 BCE) died, his younger brother, Duke Wu (r. 399–387 BCE), assumed the dukedom. After Duke Wu's death in 387 BCE, Duke Lie's heir apparent, Zhang, assumed the dukedom as Duke Jing (r. 386–375 BCE), whereupon Duke Wu's son Zichao staged an uprising. It failed, and Zichao fled to Wei. Duke Wu of Wei, to befriend Zichao, attacked and defeated Zhao in 386 BCE and forced Zhao to relocate its capital to Handan. Zhao and Wei fought again between 383 and 381 BCE, dragging in several other states and ending in Wei's defeat. Wei lost all its northern territories (situated on the far side

12. The major battles occurred as follows: Wei built a stronghold west of the Yellow River in 419 BCE; Wei attacked and seriously defeated Qin at Zhengxia in 413 BCE and again at Fanpeng, which it occupied in 412 BCE; Wei attacked Qin and occupied Linjin and Yuanli in 409 BCE; Wei sacked Luoyin and Heyang and completely occupied Qin's land between the Yellow and Luo Rivers in 408 BCE.

13. This is the first war of great casualties during the Age of Total War.

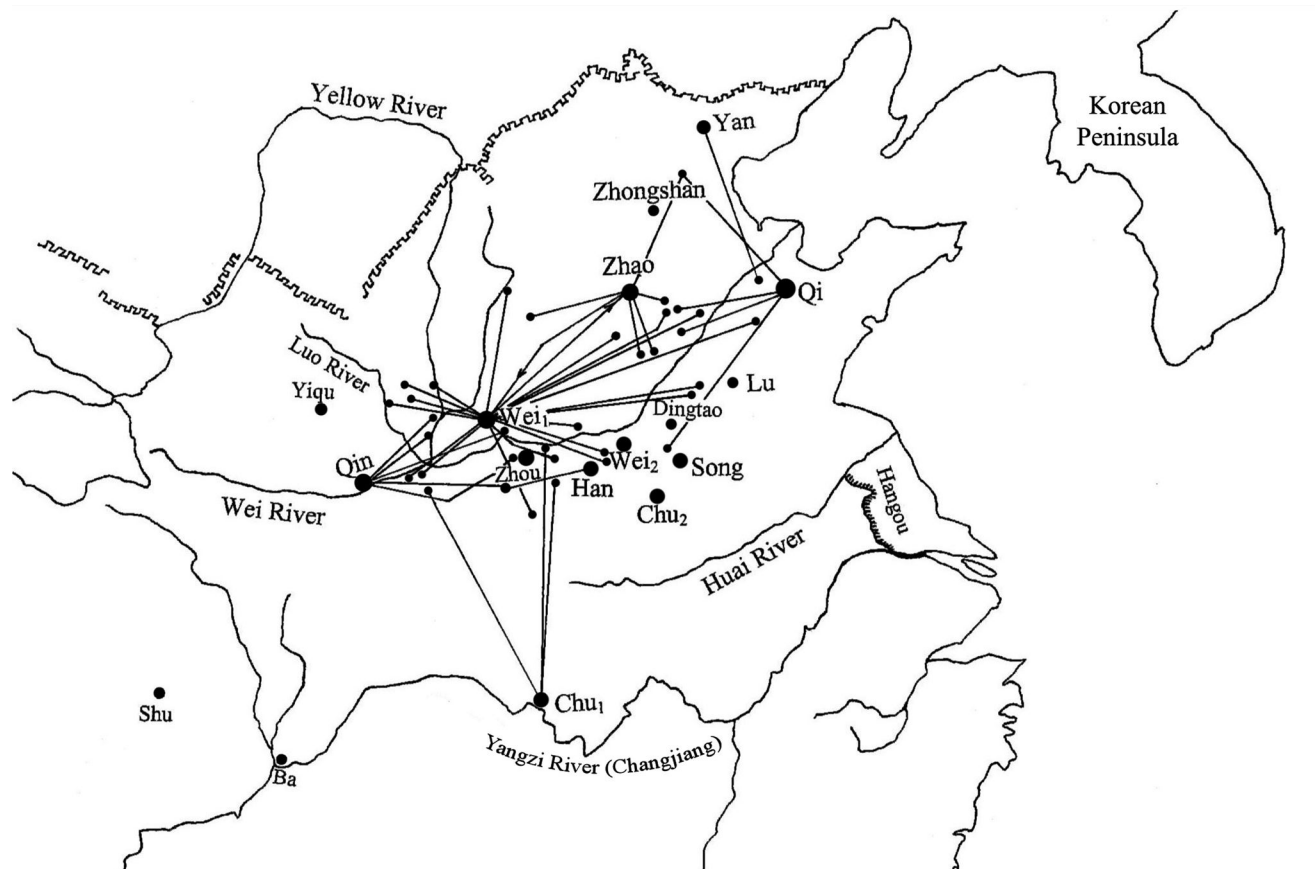


FIGURE 8.2. War networks for the years between 419 and 365 BCE

of Zhao), particularly Zhongshan, which Wei had fought for three years to annex. (Zhongshan regained its independence after Wei's defeat). Thereafter, although Zhao fought alongside Wei against Qi in 380 and 378 BCE, the Three Jin alliance was fractured. Wei virtually had to fight alone in all directions, as the war records of 375–364 BCE clearly indicate. It attacked Chu in 375 and 371 BCE, Qi in 373 BCE, Zhao in 372 and 370 BCE, and Han and Song in 365 BCE; it was attacked by Zhao in 379 BCE, Zhao and Han in 370 and 369 BCE, Qi in 368 BCE, and Qin in 366 and 364 BCE.

Of these encounters, the Battle of Shimen between Qin and Wei in 364 BCE was the most crucial. With a recorded death toll of 60,000 Wei soldiers, it was Wei's first major setback in more than fifty years of Wei-Qin conflict. This loss, together with another in a Qin-Wei battle fought in 362 BCE, forced Wei to move its capital east in 361 BCE from Anyi to Daliang, to be away from Qin and to shift its geopolitical focus to the east. The move soon proved to be a failure. In the Battle of Guiling in 353 BCE, Wei was defeated by Zhao allied with Qi. At Maling in 341 BCE, Wei was defeated by Qi. Wei's crown prince, Shen, was killed; its military commander, Pang Juan, committed suicide; and most of Wei's 100,000 soldiers were killed or captured. Immediately after the Battle of Maling, in 340 BCE, Qin defeated Wei and regained its lost territory west of the Yellow River. No longer was Wei a leading contender among the warring states, though it remained a formidable power. For a more contextualized picture of Wei's decline and how its poor geopolitical situation contributed thereto, let us consider the Battles of Guiling and Maling in more detail.

Although many states took part in these two campaigns, the Qi army played a crucial role in both. The Qi troops were said to have been commanded by Tian Ji and his chief adviser, Sun Bin. Sun Bin is known to have written a book entitled *The Art of War*, which may not have survived beyond the Eastern Han dynasty. We know that Sunzi, who shared the same surname with Sun Bin but lived more than a hundred years earlier, wrote a book with the same title, which was passed down to become China's first and foremost military treatise. Since no Chinese historian after the Eastern Han period actually saw Sun Bin's book, there had always been doubts about the existence of both the putative book and its putative author. But with the discovery of both books in 1972, the one by Sunzi and the one by Sun Bin, in the same Western Han tomb at Yinqueshan, Shandong, we now know that Sun Bin was not Sunzi, and that Sun Bin might have commanded the Qi army in the Battles of Guiling and Maling.

Standard Chinese historiography has typically attributed Wei's loss in both battles to Pang Juan's mediocre military ability versus Sun Bin's military mastery. Such assertions may contain an element of truth, but in my view there was a deeper reason for Wei's defeat. The Battles of Guiling in 353 BCE and Maling in 341 BCE were fought very similarly. Wei attacked the other two Jins (Zhao in 353 BCE and Han in 342 BCE); both times, Qi did not join the fighting until Wei's

army was exhausted. In the Battle of Guiling, the Qi army entered the battle after Wei had besieged the Zhao capital, Handan, for a year, and finally sacked the city. In the Battle of Maling, Qi did not send troops until Han had been defeated in five battles with Wei. Neither time did Qi send its army directly to the battlefield. Instead, Qi's army attacked the Wei capital, forcing the Wei army to leave the battlefield and defend the capital. Both times, the Qi army ambushed the Wei troops en route. In this way did Qi win the battle. Sun Bin did prove himself an outstanding military commander in both campaigns, but Pang Juan's failure might not have been solely due to his personal ineptness, as the historical sources have said. If the Three Jin had still been united as they were before 386 BCE, it is unlikely that Qi could have done very much even with Sun Bin's military aptitude. Only after Wei had alienated Zhao and Han was Wei's fate sealed. As noted earlier, while Wei was fighting the Battle of Guiling, Qin and Chu seized the opportunity to launch their own attacks: Qin invaded Wei's western territory and sacked two of Wei's very important cities, Yuanli and Shaoliang, killing 7,000 Wei soldiers; Chu attacked Wei from the south and occupied a territory located along the border separating the present-day Jiangsu and Shandong provinces from Anhui province. At this point, Wei's military might still have been stronger than that of any single state, but it was not strong enough to fight several wars at the same time.

THE WEAKNESSES OF QI, CHU, AND ZHAO

After Wei's decline, Qi, Chu, and Zhao were all militarily formidable, but Qin was the only superpower. Why was Qi, Chu, or Zhao unable to replace Wei as a superpower that could stop Qin? This section ventures to answer the question. No systematic work has been done on the question in China or abroad, and the available data are quite limited. The following analysis, therefore, includes some speculation.

Qi

Qi became one of the most powerful of the states during the reign of Duke Huan in the early seventh century BCE. Although Qi's military capacity was somewhat diminished after Duke Huan's death, it remained a major power up to the Age of Total War. As noted in chapter 5, Qi, like Jin, had experienced a serious feudal crisis during the sixth century BCE. But, whereas Jin was divided up into three states as a result of its feudal crisis, the entire state of Qi was taken over in 481 BCE by the powerful Tian lineage, which eradicated the other aristocratic lineages one by one. By the Age of Total War, Qi was the largest state in east China; its territory corresponds to a large part of present-day Shandong province plus a part of Hebei province. Qi had a large population, advanced agriculture and commerce; its capital, Linzi, was the largest and one of the most commercialized cities of the

time. Qi was in a better geopolitical position than the other states, with the exception of Qin. The east and northeast borders of Qi's territory were protected by the sea. In the south Qi bordered Lu, Song, Chu, and a few small states. Except for Chu, none of those states posed any major threat to Qi. North of Qi was the weak state of Yan. Qi's major threat came from the west, mainly from Wei and occasionally Zhao. Wei's decline to a great extent freed Qi from the threat of western assault. Qi's biggest geopolitical advantage, of course, was its great distance from Qin. Before Qi was conquered by Qin in 221 BCE, it had been attacked by Qin only three times, in 320, 285, and 270 BCE, in relatively minor incursions. Qin never posed a direct threat to Qi until very late in the Age of Total War.

Qi was unable to develop into a supreme military power during the Age of Total War for several reasons. First, and perhaps most importantly, Qi's Legalist reform was never as complete or thorough as that in Qin. Qi underwent several incremental changes after the reign of Duke Huan in the seventh century BCE. The last and perhaps the most rigorous of these occurred during the reign of King Wei. We know very little of how Qi's reforms operated. Based on very limited information in *Grand Historian* as well as a few other sources,¹⁴ it appears that Qi's reform was wide-ranging rather than concentrated, as Qin's single-minded institution-building under Shang Yang was. Qi's Legalism also emphasized, more so than Qin's, the importance of good advisers and capable officials.¹⁵ The enthusiasm for this naturally flagged when capable kings or officials retired or passed away.

There were also cultural differences behind Qi's less radical changes. Unlike Qin, Qi was a highly "civilized" state with a long tradition of intellectual pluralism and eclecticism. Qi was the only major power during the Age of Total War to have a sizable institution of royal patronage, which also functioned as a government think tank, an advisory body, and a talent pool.¹⁶ The royal patronage

14. *Grand Historian* ("History of Tian Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959).

15. In *Grand Historian* ("History of Tian Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1888, 1891), Sima Qian tells several stories that reveal Qi's notion of good rulership. The first change made by King Wei of Qi (r. 358–325 BCE) was to execute a widely praised city governor who had actually governed poorly and promote another city governor who had governed very well despite being frequently criticized. Another dramatic account conveys a similar message. While King Wei of Qi and King Hui of Wei were hunting together in Pinglu (in Qi), King Hui boasted that he owned twelve carts of treasures, and then asked King Wei what treasures he possessed. King Wei replied:

I do not possess any. We have different opinions of what constitutes treasures. I have an official named Tanzi. After he was asked to defend Nancheng, Chu no longer dares to attack us and dukes of twelve states in the Si River valley come to pay tribute. I have an official named Panzi. When I appointed him to defend Gao Tang, the Zhao people no longer come to our side of the river to fish. . . . I also have an official named Zhong Shou. After he was put in charge of local crime control, people no longer even pocket anything that others have lost on the ground. These people shine brightly. They are much more valuable than the twelve carts of treasures that you have.

16. Sima Qian in *Grand Historian* ("History of Tian Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1895): the Jixia scholars "advised and criticized state politics without actually ruling the country." Western Han dynasty scholars made a similar comment on the think-tank and advisory role of the Jixia "scholars": "[They] gave advice on the

system, later anachronistically understood as an academy of learning and thus named Jixia Academy,¹⁷ emerged in the late fifth century BCE and lasted about 150 years, until Qi was sacked in 284 BCE by a Yan general leading a troop of allied forces.¹⁸ During the reign of King Xuan (319–301 BCE), the royal patronage system boasted over a thousand scholars, not including their numerous disciples.¹⁹ The leading scholars of Jixia (there were seventy-six of them during the reign of King Xuan) were also granted the highest aristocratic titles,²⁰ enjoyed a great deal of prestige throughout the state, and were able to live extravagantly.²¹ The Jixia royal patronage community comprised scholars of almost every “school” of thought that emerged during the Age of Total War and attracted intellectual celebrities who had a long-lasting impact on Chinese philosophies.²² Qin, in contrast, had never had an indigenous intellectual tradition. Yet Qin’s very “backwardness” gave it the freedom to adopt only the most utilitarian Legalism as guiding principles for its radical transformations (see chapter 7) and to block proponents of other “schools” of thought from entering Qin after Shang Yang’s reforms.²³ Such efforts retarded the development of any indigenous philosophy in Qin, but they did greatly promote an efficiency-driven instrumental culture and

state’s political matters from outside the officialdom” (*On Salt and Iron*, “Lunru 11”; reproduced in Wang 1992, p. 149).

Grand Historian (“History of Tian Qi”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1890) also contains a lengthy story of Chunyu Kun offering advice to Qi’s new prime minister, Zou Ji, on how to be a good ruler. In *Stratagems* (Miao 1987): “Chunyu Kun recommended seven individuals to King Xuan in a day” (Qi 3, p. 377), and that Jixia “scholar” Wang Dou urged King Xuan to appoint five able individuals to official positions (Qi 4, p. 403). The latter two stories serve as additional examples of Qi laying more stress on ethical and capable individuals than on institutions in strengthening a state.

17. See Sivin (1995) for an excellent analysis of how the royal patronage at Jixia has been misunderstood by modern scholars as a government-sponsored academic institution.

18. Although the Jixia royal patronage was later revived, it never regained even a fraction of its former prestige. See Bai (1998, pp. 35–54) on the origins, development, and decline of the Jixia Academy.

19. For example, one of the major purposes of Xunzi’s *Zhenglunpian* is to refute another Jixia scholar, Song Xing, who, according to Xunzi, had numerous followers (*Xunzi*, “Zhenglun 18”; reproduced in Wang 1988, pp. 321–45). Xunzi also had many disciples, Hanfeizi and Li Si being the most famous. Tian Pian, another Jixia scholar, also had about a hundred disciples (Bai 1998, p. 59).

20. *Grand Historian* (“History of Tian Qi”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1895).

21. *Stratagems* (Qi 4; reproduced in Miao 1987, pp. 407–408) relates that a person once mocked Jixia scholar Tian Pian for his wealth, saying: “My neighbor’s daughter vows never to marry, but has borne seven children by the age of thirty. Yes, she is indeed not married, but she has more children than those who are actually married. You sir, while claiming that you do not want to be an official, have already accumulated a huge amount of wealth and are served by hundreds of assistants. Yes, you are indeed not an official, but your wealth has already surpassed that of the officials.” The story ends with an obviously upset Tian Pian asking that person to leave. It shows clearly the prestige and affluence that a leading Jixia scholar could have enjoyed.

22. The most famous Jixia scholars included Xunzi and Lu Zhonglian (later regarded as Confucians), Tian Pian, Peng Meng, and Jiezi (later regarded as Daoists), Song Xing (later regarded as Mohist), Zou Yan and Zou Shi (later regarded as yin-yang scholars), Yin Wen and Tian Ba (known in the English-speaking world for the “rectification of names”), Shen Dao and a group of scholars who compiled the *Guanzi* (later regarded as Legalists). Some Jixia scholars were too eclectic to be placed under any particular “school” of thought (the most famous one was Chunyu Kun). Again, the categorization of Warring States philosophies within different schools of thought was a Western Han dynasty invention. Jixia “scholars” were highly eclectic. My classification of them is necessarily somewhat arbitrary.

23. Bai (1998, pp. 31–32).

help Qin to organize the entire state into a war machine.²⁴ The flourishing of different philosophical traditions in Qi, however, fostered a culture of tolerance and pluralism and led to political moderation.²⁵ In Qi, Daoist ideology and yin-yang cosmology remained influential throughout the Age of Total War. Although Legalist thinking was popular, its dominant form in Qi was Confucian-inclined or Daoist-influenced, which emphasized the achievement of a harmonic balance between instrumental Legalism and Confucian morals or between instrumental Legalism and the rhythms of nature.²⁶ Qi scholarship has contributed significantly to traditional Chinese culture. In the Western Han dynasty Xunzi's political philosophy, which merged Legalism and Confucianism, became the guiding principle of state politics, and yin-yang cosmology, after being incorporated into Confucianism by Dong Zhongshu, became one element in the foundation of state legitimacy (see chapter 9). But in the Age of Total War, Qi's intellectual pluralism and eclecticism proved disadvantageous to its survival, preventing the implementation of radical Legalist reforms and promoting a culture that emphasized leadership and ideas more than organizations and institutions.

Finally, although Qi had a superb geopolitical location, it failed to capitalize on it for military advantage, unlike Qin. Bluntly put, whereas Qin used its geopolitical advantage to win wars, Qi used its to hide behind Wei, Han, Zhao, and Chu. Until the last stage of the Age of Total War, Qi was largely insulated from any direct assault by Qin. Instead of assisting other states in resisting Qin, Qi either took the opportunity to obtain only minor gains (e.g., to bully Song and Yan) or held aloof at critical moments when its buffer states were fighting for their very existence against Qin. The War of Changping from 261 to 259 BCE, for example, was a decisive struggle to which both Zhao and Qin had committed almost all their manpower and resources. In its second year, Zhao, facing serious food shortages, beseeched Qi for help. Qi refused to provide aid. In the end Zhao was defeated, with a reported loss of some 400,000 soldiers.²⁷ As many Chinese historians have noted, while Qin spent much of its resources on the instruments of war, the Qi rulers spent a large part of theirs on lavish palaces and high living.²⁸

24. In *Book of Lord Shang* ("Leling 13"; reproduced in Xie and Zhu 2003, p. 91), such a measure of state control was called "one hole only," which meant "to limit the desires of the people until they have only one release point"—that is, to fight bravely and to support the war efforts.

25. Wang (1997, chap. 5).

26. Jixia scholars frequently used music metaphors to express their views of the art of politics. In *Grand Historian* ("History of Tian Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1889–90) Sima Qian relates that Zou Ji was appointed Qi's chief minister because, in a conversation with King Wei, he had drawn good analogies between the art of good rhythms, melodies, and harmonies in music and the skills of governance. In the same work Sima Qian also described a conversation between Zou Ji and Chunyu Kun. Chunyu Kun introduced five enigmatic analogies to test Zou Ji's intelligence and to advise him on state politics. One of these analogies also contained a musical metaphor: "A cart cannot carry cargo properly if it is not balanced; and lute and psaltery cannot produce five harmonious sounds if they are not properly tuned." Zou Ji replied: "Your great advice is humbly acknowledged. I need to revise the legal codes carefully, and to be vigilant regarding treacherous officials."

27. *Grand Historian* ("History of Tian Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1902).

28. Li Yujie (1999, p. 217); Wang Zhimin (1993, pp. 82–83).

Xunzi's comment on the Qi rulers demonstrates great insight:²⁹ "[Qi] did not prepare to fight Qin, did not support the other five states when they attacked Qin, and allowed Qin to conquer the five states. After the other five states had fallen and Qin soldiers stood before Linzi, no person in Qi dared to step out and fight."

Chu

Grand Historian contains a story that Su Qin, one of the two most famous strategists of the time, tried to persuade King Wei of Chu (r. 339–329 BCE) to form an alliance with the other states to resist Qin's increasingly pressing military threat. Su Qin told King Wei:³⁰

Chu is a very powerful state under heaven and Your Majesty is a great king. Chu's territory extends to Qianzhong and Wujun in the west, Xiazhou and Haiyang in the east, Dongting and Cangwu in the south, and Xingsaishan and Huanyang in the north. It covers five thousand *li* and fields an army of a million soldiers, thousands of chariots, and ten thousand horses. Its grains [food supply] could last ten years. On this basis you could obtain hegemonic status under Heaven. With Chu's strength and Your Majesty's greatness, no state will ever be able to compete with Chu.³¹

Su Qin's rhetoric contained elements of truth—Chu did possess vast territory, rich resources, and abundant manpower.³² During the Age of Total War, Chu, centered on today's Hubei province, encompassed parts of numerous present-day Chinese provinces, including Shaanxi and Henan in the north, much of Anhui, and some of Shandong, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang in the east, much of Hunan and Jiangxi, some of Guangdong in the south, and Guangxi and Guizhou in the west. Chu was by far the largest and most populous state (not in density but in number) at the time and had a standing army larger than any other state's. Still to persuade King Wei to take all possible measures against Qin's war machine, Su Qin supposedly had to bolster King Wei's confidence by exaggerating Chu's military strength.³³

29. Xunzi ("Qiangguo 16"; reproduced in Wang 1988).

30. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Su Qin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2259).

31. One *li* at the time equaled 0.415 kilometers.

32. When Su Qin tried the same theme in other states his numbers were as follows: "Zhao's territory expands over two thousand *li*. It fields several hundred thousand warriors." "Qi's territory expands over two thousand *li*. It fields several hundred thousand warriors." "Han's territory expands over 900 *li*. It fields several hundred thousand of warriors." Comparing his numbers gives us a sense of the relative size of a state (*Grand Historian*, "Biography of Su Qin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2247, 2250, 2257).

33. Most Chinese historians tend to take Su Qin's rhetoric and other similar received texts at face value, and accordingly grossly overestimate Chu's military strength at the time of King Wei (e.g., Y. Li 2002, p. 349; Wang 2004, p. 82). In fact, during the Age of Total War, Chu was able to conquer only minor states in the south. Of all the wars during the Age of Total War with recorded casualties over 10,000 warriors, none was the result of Chu's military success.

Despite Chu's vast territory, larger population and standing army, and defensible geopolitical position (before Qin conquered Shu and Ba in 316 BCE, Chu faced enemies only in the north), Chu played only a minor role in the Age of Total War, initiating a total of seventeen military conflicts, of which only seven were aimed at one of the other six major states. In comparison, Qin waged 106 wars against the other six major powers in the same period, followed by Wei (33), Zhao (25), and Qi (22). Why might a state with so vast a territory and a population act so timidly during a time of wholesale aggressiveness? A few Chinese historians have argued Chu's lack of aggressive spirit, resulting in "primitive" technology and in low productivity.³⁴ Yet during the Age of Hegemons, Chu was regarded by its northern neighbors as very aggressive and "lacking virtue."³⁵ The argument of Chu's "primitiveness" is not borne out by recent archaeological findings of a splendid culture.³⁶ It has now been widely acknowledged that although a large part of Chu's territory was sparsely populated, its core, which was still much larger than any other single state, had a large population, produced the best weapons, and had a level of technological development comparable with that of any other major state. Nevertheless, Chu could not turn its advantages into military dominance or even resist Qin's attacks. Its principle impediment, in my opinion, was political stagnation.

As discussed in chapter 4, in the Age of Hegemons, Chu was the most powerful state mainly because it was able to establish a bureaucracy more sophisticated and efficient than existed in any other state. Its kings wielded enormous power; they were able to dismiss or execute any high level official for any reason (see chapter 5). Chu's strong king and bureaucracy immunized it against the feudal crises rupturing the other large states (except Qin).³⁷ This, however, had a huge unintended consequence. The feudal crisis that had split Jin into three states and brought down the ducal houses in other major states created a political vacuum in those states and the impetus for Legalist transformation, including the establishment of full-fledged bureaucracies (chapters 6, 8). Without the destruction created by feudal crisis, it was hard for Chu to implement wholesale reform because the centuries-old, king-dominated balance between aristocrats and the royal house had become a hard-to-break tradition and source of conservatism. This is evident in the failure of the Legalist reform begun by Wu Qi in about 388 BCE.

Wu Qi was a Wei general who had played a crucial role in Wei's Legalist transformation and military expansion. Wu Qi had demonstrated his military talent in 389 BCE, when he led 50,000 Wei soldiers to defeat a Qin army of allegedly a

34. Wang Shaodong (2004, pp. 82–83).

35. *Zuo's Commentary* (Xuan 11, 598 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, p. 711).

36. Gao and Liu (1995); Liu (1996); Song and Zhang (1995); Q. Yang (2003).

37. See chapter 5 for the origin and impact of the sixth-century feudal crisis in the other major states and its absence in Chu.

half million strong. Soon after this war, Wu Qi left Wei for Chu, because certain incidents had led him to believe that he was no longer trusted by Duke Wu of Wei (r. 395–370 BCE). Soon after arriving at Chu, Wu Qi was appointed by King Dao (r. 410–381 BCE) as Chu's chief minister, commissioned to lead Chu's reform. According to *Hanfeizi*,³⁸ before starting the job, Wu Qi told King Dao: "Chu's problems are that ministers are too powerful and feudal lords too many. They harry the king above [them] and bully the subjects below. This is why Chu is a poor state with a weak military." Naturally, Wu Qi's major goals were to limit the power and prerogatives of the aristocracies, promote merit, eliminate redundant offices, and dismiss unqualified officials. Needless to say, all these measures were geared toward strengthening the military.³⁹

Wu Qi must have had some success. *Grand Historian* relates: "Not long after the reform was started, Chu conquered Baiyue in the south,⁴⁰ annexed Chen and Cai in the north, defeated Han, Wei, and Zhao, and attacked Qin. Other states became apprehensive at Chu's growing strength."⁴¹ But Wu Qi's measures were widely resented by Chu's aristocrats. Qu Yishao, a leading aristocrat,⁴² for instance, told Wu Qi directly that "the essence of being a good ruler is not to change the tradition and not to upset the routine," adding that unremittingly strengthening Chu's military was an act of no virtue. King Dao died in 381 BCE. Wu Qi was assassinated by Chu aristocrats during the king's funeral, and his reform efforts were aborted. Throughout the Age of Total War, the aristocrats dominated Chu politics, especially the three major lineages, Shao, Jing, and Qu. Chu was also the only major state where aristocrats still owned sizable private armies.⁴³ While the rest of China entered the Age of Total War, Chu retained a political structure and style reminiscent of the early Eastern Zhou period.⁴⁴ The Legalist Hanfeizi commented very insightfully on the fate of Chu after Wu Qi's reforms were aborted: "Chu became weak and chaotic because it was unable to use Wu Qi, whereas Qin was greatly strengthened because it carried out Shang Yang's reforms."⁴⁵

38. *Hanfeizi* ("Heshi 13"; reproduced in Wang 2003, pp. 96–97).

39. For more detailed descriptions of Wu Qi's reforms and their failure, see Huang (1998, pp. 68–75); Y. Li (2002, pp. 320–23); Yang (1998, pp. 193–96).

40. According to Yang (1998, p. 195), the Baiyue mentioned in this text was located between present-day southern Jiangxi and northern Guangdong.

41. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Sunzi and Wu Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2168).

42. Chu politics at the time was dominated by three aristocratic lineages (Qu, Jing, and Shao). Most of Chu's chief ministers and other high-level officials were from these three lineages (Y. Li 1999, pp. 332–33), a situation reminiscent of Chu politics during the Age of Hegemons (see chapter 6).

43. Y. Li (1999, pp. 262, 330).

44. *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* ("Chajin"; reproduced in Zhang 2007, p. 144) criticized Chu's outmoded politics and government with a parable: A Chu man who dropped his sword in a river while on a ferryboat carved the side of the boat to mark where the sword went down. After arriving at the opposite bank the man started to look for the sword according to the mark carved, of course to no avail. The message of the parable could not be clearer: Chu was weak because its old ways of governance could not deal effectively with new situations.

45. *Hanfeizi* ("Wentian 42"; reproduced in Wang 2003, p. 396).

Zhao

Zhao's core territory was in present-day Hebei and northern Shanxi, but it also covered part of present-day Henan, Shandong, and Inner Mongolia. Zhao's military strength reached its zenith after 307 BCE, when King Wuling of Zhao (r. 325–299 BCE) commanded his subjects to dress like nomads and learn how to ride and shoot from horseback, like nomads.⁴⁶ Zhao initiated several campaigns after these changes during which it conquered Zhongshan and expanded its territory north into present-day Inner Mongolia. Our data show that Zhao fought a total of twenty-five engagements against the other six major powers during the Age of Total War, a number that was only surpassed by Wei (33) and Qin (106). Although Zhao was never strong enough to “harness grand Qi in the east and mighty Qin in the west” as some Chinese historians have claimed,⁴⁷ it was undoubtedly the single strongest state standing in the way of Qin's military advance after Wei, Chu, and Qi had all been seriously weakened. Not until Zhao was fatally crushed by Qin in 260 BCE, in the War of Changping, did Qin's conquest of China become inevitable. Let us focus on that war, the most decisive and brutal clashes of the time, to discover, if possible, the structural forces underlying Zhao's fateful defeat.

The War of Changping began when Qin attacked Han's Shangdang region.⁴⁸ In a series of previous campaigns, especially the Battle of Nanyang in 263 BCE and the Battle of Yewang in 262 BCE, Qin had occupied the midsection of Han's territories and cut off Shangdang from Han's political center in the south. No longer able to defend the region, the local Han governor turned it over to Zhao rather than surrender it to Qin. In the court, discussing whether Zhao should accept the land, Prince Pingyang advised King Xiaocheng against doing so, to avoid provoking Qin, but Prince Pingyuan advised accepting it. The king took Prince Pingyuan's advice. In response, Qin attacked Zhao. *Grand Historian* contains a fascinating account of Zhao's defeat in several initial engagements, of Qin's inability to break Zhao's defense system after Zhao's commanding general, Lian Po, assumed a defensive position, of King Xiaocheng's effort to reach a peace settlement with Qin that in the end only delayed the formation of an anti-Qin alliance with the other states, and finally, of King Xiaocheng's dismissal of Lian Po in favor of the mediocre general Zhao Kuo because of a rumor spread by Qin's secret agents that Lian Po was going to defect to Qin.⁴⁹ These are considered by Chinese historians to be the reasons behind Zhao's decisive defeat.

46. The reform was specifically aimed to adopt nomadic military technologies to fight more effectively (*Grand Historian*, “History of Zhao”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1808–9).

47. Shen et al. (2000, p. 219).

48. Chinese historians have attributed Zhao's defeat to King Xiaocheng of Zhao (r. 265–245 BCE) and to a certain extent to his chief minister Prince Pingyuan's inability to direct the war (e.g., Yang 1998, pp. 412–16). The analysis by Shen Changyun et al. (2000, chap. 8) is a notable partial exception.

49. *Grand Historian* (“History of Zhao”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1826 and “Biographies of Lian Po and Lin Xiangru”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2446).

This conviction is not groundless. After Zhao Kuo was appointed general commander, his mother went to King Xiaocheng to plead against her son's appointment. She explained to the king the differences between her son and her husband, Zhao She, a famous Zhao general who had died a few years earlier:⁵⁰

When I served his father, I was able to see how his father acted as a commander. On dozens of occasions I witnessed his father holding dishes or cups with his hands to feed the soldiers. His father had several hundred close friends in the army, and all the money that Your Majesty and other lords awarded him he gave away to his subordinates and their families. While living, his father was able to turn his attention away from family matters completely once receiving a military order. But now, after being appointed as the general commander, Zhao Kuo immediately sat facing the east to receive his subordinates, during which I saw that all the soldiers and commanders dared not even to raise their eyes to look at him. Moreover, he brought home all the gifts that Your Majesty had bestowed on him, and spent lots of time looking for good deals on houses and lands. Can Your Majesty perceive the differences between the father and son? They are different people, and I hope Your Majesty will not appoint my son as the commander.

No doubt Zhao Kuo was a less fitting commander than his father or Lian Po of the Zhao army. But the following three structural conditions may also have been underlying causes of Zhao's military fiasco.

First, among the five most powerful states (Qin, Wei, Zhao, Qi, Chu), Zhao and Wei had the most disadvantageous geopolitical positions. Zhao faced Qin and Han in the west, Wei and Han in the south, Qi in the east, and Yan in the north. Moreover, during and after the fourth century BCE, as the Xiongnu, a nomadic confederation of north Asia, grew more formidable, Zhao also had to confront their increasing threat from the north. Although Zhao held the upper hand in its conflicts with the Xiongnu, this nonetheless meant that it had to station considerable number of troops in the north,⁵¹ which suggests why Zhao was the only state to adopt nomadic dress and military technologies as part of their Legalist transformation. Zhao's poor geopolitical position forced it to spread its defenses in all directions. Even when Zhao's fate was at stake during the War of Changping, it still had to station a large army under Li Mu, one of its

50. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Lian Po and Lin Xiangru"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2447).

51. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Lian Po and Lin Xiangru"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2449–50) records that the Zhao troops experienced repeated defeats by the Xiongnu after King Xiaocheng removed Li Mu, then one of Zhao's most capable generals, from local command. Not until the king reappointed Li Mu and gave him a free hand did the Zhao army gain the upper hand against the Xiongnu.

most talented generals, in the north to ward off a Xiongnu attack.⁵² Moreover, Qin was able to transport its troops and food supplies by water, using the Wei River, the Yellow River, and then the Fen River, whereas Zhao had to transport its armies and supplies by land. Second, Zhao's agricultural productivity compared unfavorably with that of Qin. In about 260 BCE, Qin controlled several of the grain-growing regions of China, such as the Wei River valley, Sichuan basin, and Hanzhong, whereas a large part of Zhao's territory lay in the far north, on land that was less than ideal for growing crops. Even in the Ji commandery, the most important agricultural region in Zhao's heartland, most of the soil was alkaline and of poor quality.⁵³ Zhao's agricultural technologies also lagged behind those of Qin. When Prince Pingyang urged King Xiaocheng not to take over the Shangdang region from Han, one of his major reasons was that "Qin ploughed their land with oxen and transported their grain by water."⁵⁴ By the time of the War of Changping, the ox-drawn deep plough was widely used in Qin, but not in Zhao.⁵⁵ Even though the battlefield was adjacent to Zhao's homeland, Zhao experienced severe food shortages during the second year of the war and had to turn to Qi for help, which Qi refused.⁵⁶ *Grand Historian* portrays Zhao Kuo's abandonment of Lian Po's defensive strategy and his decision to confront the Qin army head-on soon after taking command as a strategic blunder. Viewed retrospectively, however, Zhao Kuo might have been compelled by the grain shortage to change the military strategy in the hopes that a showdown with Qin would bring relief.⁵⁷ Prince Pingyang knew only too well that war had to be sustained by resources and logistics and that Qin had the upper hand in both. Once Zhao was defeated, its acceptance of Shangdang from Han was immediately seen as a blunder, which Sima Qian and China's later historians have blamed on King Xiaocheng and Prince Pingyuan. But King Xiaocheng had been faced with a very difficult choice. By 260 BCE, Qin's ambition and military power were there for all to see. If the king had refused to take Shangdang, the Qin army would have been at Zhao's gates. Prince Pingyang's objection could only delay the showdown between Zhao and Qin for a while.

52. Li Mu's troops were stationed at Yanmen, a mountain pass located in present-day Shanxi province. According to *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Lian Po and Lin Xiangru"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2449–50), Li Mu commanded an army of 50,000 infantry and 100,000 archers. This army was crucial to the defense of Zhao after the War of Changping.

53. Shen et al. (2000, p. 198).

54. *Stratagems* (Zhao 1; reproduced in Miao 1987, p. 621).

55. Prince Pingyang's argument indicates that ox-drawn plows were not yet common in Zhao. See *Stratagems* (Zhao 1; reproduced in Miao 1987, p. 621).

56. *Grand Historian* ("History of Tian Qi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1902). See the previous discussion of Qi's refusal for more detail.

57. According to *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Bai Qi and Wang Jian"; 1959, p. 2335), the Qin army was able to block the grain supply of the Zhao army for forty-six days. The Zhao troops were compelled to start an offensive while their morale and strength were very low. The Zhao commander, Zhao Kuo, was killed in the battle, and the surviving Zhao warriors surrendered but were buried alive by the Qin army.

Third, according to Sima Qian, King Xiaocheng replaced Lian Po with Zhao Kuo because he believed the false rumor that Lian Po intended to defect to Qin. Chinese historians then followed Sima Qian in blaming King Xiaocheng for distrusting his most capable general. But a deeper reason may have fueled King Xiaocheng's suspicion. As mentioned in the introduction, and as will be discussed further in the next section, ideologies similar to modern nationalism and patriotism did not exist in China's Age of Total War.⁵⁸ Therefore, political advisers or military commanders of the time resemble the CEOs of modern companies in a sense that they could easily leave one state for a better position in another. In this context, rumor about Lian Po's defection was one that King Xiaocheng could not afford to ignore, especially considering that Lian Po, though commanding most of Zhao's army, would obviously be unable to win the war. During the Age of Total War, Qin had played this hoax several times to induce kings of their intended victim states to dismiss their ablest generals.⁵⁹

EASTERN ZHOU INTERSTATE RELATIONS

In considering the question of why Eastern Zhou China but not early modern Europe ended in unification,⁶⁰ a recent publication⁶¹ proposed that "international politics should be seen as processes of strategic interaction between domination-seekers and targets of domination," with the processes constrained by two major mechanisms—"balance of power and the rising costs of expansion."⁶² China could be unified because the ancient Chinese states were able to adopt "self-strengthening reforms" and "clever strategies" (referring to the Legalist transformations and the warring states' cunning diplomatic maneuverings, depicted in the *Stratagems*) that overcame these constraints. But, "[a]lthough European powers pursued opportunistic expansion and practiced counterbalancing strategies, they rarely employed cunning and ruthless tactics against one another . . . as was common in the ancient Chinese system."⁶³ The

58. Chu was a partial exception to this conclusion, being unique in two aspects. First, Chu did not originate as a Western Zhou city-state, and its aristocracies' identity always differed somewhat from that of aristocracies of the Western Zhou city-states. Secondly, Chu did not experience a feudal crisis, as most other major states did. By the Age of Total War, whereas most officials in other states were hired bureaucrats, Chu officials were mostly from the centuries-old aristocratic lineages, and consequently had a stronger sense of belonging and loyalty. It was, therefore, not an accident that "patriots" such as Qu Yuan (ca. 339–278 BCE), whose story was frequently appropriated in twentieth-century China to construct Chinese nationalism, emerged only in Chu.

59. See the introduction for more examples.

60. The following analysis is intended to bring out the fundamental differences between the state system of early modern Europe and Eastern Zhou China. To highlight the differences, "interstate relations" refers to the geopolitics of Eastern Zhou China and "international relations" to the geopolitics of early modern Europe.

61. Hui (2005).

62. Hui (2005, p. 33).

63. Hui (2005, p. 36).

European domination-seekers' failure to "employ the whole repertoire of the logic of domination" explains, according to the author, their inability to achieve unification.⁶⁴ While the argument has some merit, I disagree with fundamental aspects of it.

First, not only were European domination-seekers constrained by the rising power of the bourgeoisie and the continuing influence of the papacy, bishops, and aristocracies, but the European political landscape was also, as Finer has nicely put it, "littered with medieval survivals in the shape of Estates and Diets, municipalities, corporations, *parlements* and other law courts, civil servants, and so forth."⁶⁵ In Europe, if a king wanted money from the society beyond what he was customarily entitled to, he had to ask for it. Any attempt to restructure the society in ways similar to the Legalist reforms in ancient China was far beyond the capacity of even the most despotic kings or princes (see chapter 7). Moreover, our analysis of the ancient Chinese case in previous chapters has demonstrated the limitations of a simple actor-centered analysis. Previous chapters have shown that Eastern Zhou history was shaped by a chain of processes that were mostly unintended by the historical actors, and that the historical actors' choices and the social impact of their actions were shaped by structural conditions crystallized in the historical processes. Nevertheless, the issues raised in the publication just mentioned are meaningful and deserve attention. In conducting the same comparison, I will introduce the historical and structural differences between Eastern Zhou China and early modern Europe, and reveal how these differences shaped different modes of warfare, constructed different kinds of "international relations," and led to unification in ancient China and the persistence of a multi-state system in early modern Europe.

Chapters 6 and 7 elaborated on the basic structural conditions that contributed to China's unification: the overwhelming supremacy of Legalism in the politics of the most powerful states; the synergistic relationships among Legalist ideologies, warfare, and the growing strength of Legalist states; and the lack of checks and balances to growing state power from societal forces (the aristocracy, the merchants, and the newly outspoken *shi*). With these earlier analyses as background, the following discussion exclusively addresses the wherefore of unification in one place and a plenitude of nation-states in the other.

Let us start with the major issues that triggered Eastern Zhou wars. By roughly following Holsti's categorization,⁶⁶ we can identify eleven war-triggering issues during the Eastern Zhou period in China:⁶⁷

64. Hui (2005, p. 35).

65. Finer (1997, p. 1307).

66. Holsti (1991).

67. It could be argued that some war-inducing issues, such as covenant enforcement, state integrity, and marriage conflicts, could be excuses for a dominance-seeker to initiate aggression. Wars of these kinds are very few, and their decline and eventual disappearance as war-inducing issues is also very telling.

Territory: Wars to eliminate another state or to expand one's territory at the expense of other states.⁶⁸

Dominance: Wars aimed at coercing other states into alliance with the aggressors or into submission.

Balance of power: Wars initiated by one or more states to challenge or check another state's attempt at dominance of territorial acquisition.

Defending/supporting ally: Wars initiated by one or more states after an ally has been attacked. Wars coded as "defending/supporting ally" and "balance of power" were highly similar. The major difference is that the latter tended to be more aggressive and often involved military actions beyond mere assistance to an ally.

Covenant enforcement: War initiated by a (dominant) state to enforce an existing covenant.

Succession: Wars induced by domestic succession crises.

Internal strife: Wars among aristocratic lineages within a state or wars between the ruler and the powerful aristocratic lineages of a state. This kind of war could embroil multiple states if the parties involved had outside supporters.

Ethnicity: Wars against a state of pastoral or nomadic origin. When such a state became indistinguishable from a Chinese state in its political system and culture (such as Zhongshan during the Age of Total War), its conflict with another state no longer belongs in this category.⁶⁹

State dignity: Wars triggered by one state being insulted by another state on diplomatic occasions. When a minor state was unsatisfied with its current relationship with a dominant state and attacked that dominant state to attract certain attention such a war was also placed under this category.

Plundering: Wars for the purpose of pillaging another state.

Marriage conflict: Wars triggered by mistreatment of a sister or daughter of one ruler who was married to another.

Table 8.1 lists the relative importance of the war-triggering issues in each of the following three periods: Age of Hegemons (770–546 BCE), Age of Transition (545–420 BCE), and Age of Total War (419–221 BCE). The list confirms the tripartite classification of Eastern Zhou history from another angle. Comparing

68. I coded the "cause of war" in the received texts twice, a few months apart. The results were 96 percent consistent. Holsti distinguishes two kinds of territory-based issues under the headings of "territory" and "strategic territory" (wars aimed at possession of strategically important locations). My coding combines the two categories because they are virtually indistinguishable for our purposes.

69. The high percentage (11%) of battles that Chinese states fought with states of non-Chinese origin during the Age of Hegemons shows the significance of "barbarians" in the early Eastern Zhou period (Prušek 1971). By the Age of Total War, however, the percentage dropped to 0.8 percent, which indicates the complete dominance of the major warring states (table 8.1). By the Age of Total War, most of the Di and Rong states had been conquered by Chinese states. The few that remained independent were hardly distinguishable from the Chinese states in culture and government.

Table 8.1. Distribution of issues that generated wars in Eastern Zhou China, numerically and in percentages

Issues	Age of Hegemons (720–546 BCE)	Age of Transition (545–420 BCE)	Age of Total War (419–221 BCE)
Territory	53 (12.9%)	29 (16.8)	174 (66.9)
Dominance	190 (46.3)	71 (41.0)	30 (11.5)
Balance of power	19 (5.5)	0	31 (11.9)
Defending ally	28 (6.8)	8 (4.6)	13 (5.0)
Internal strife	9 (2.2)	45 (26.0)	3 (1.2)
Ethnicity	45 (11.0)	13 (7.5)	2 (0.8)
Succession	16 (3.9)	4 (2.3)	7 (2.7)
Covenant enforcement	33 (8.0)	2 (1.2)	0
State dignity	13 (3.2)	1 (0.6)	0
Marriage conflict	1 (0.2)	0	0
Plundering	3 (0.7)	0	0
Total	410	173	260

the importance of war-triggering issues during the Ages of Hegemons and of Transition, it is easy to see that the percentages of trademark war-triggering issues for hegemonic politics, such as dominance, covenant enforcement, balance of power, and defending/supporting an ally, declined during the Age of Transition. On the other hand, the internal strife that is characteristic of the Age of Transition skyrocketed from 2.2 percent to 26 percent. Conflicts over territory increased slightly from the Age of Hegemons (12.9%) to the Age of Transition (16.8%). This increase resulted mainly from increasing skirmishes among minor states after the collapse of hegemonic politics (see chapter 5). A major change in the cause of warfare, however, occurred during the Age of Total War, when wars over the balance of power rose to 11.9 percent. But this jump cannot match the skyrocketing rise in wars over territory (66.9%). In other words, territorial expansion became the chief purpose of war during the Age of Total War.

If we further divide the Age of Total War into the periods of Wei and Qin dominance, the above pattern becomes even more salient. As table 8.2 shows, when Wei dominated, the percentage of wars aiming at territorial expansion was 42.3 percent; during Qin dominance, it rose to 77.5 percent. On the other hand, balance-of-power wars declined from 19.2 percent to 8.8 percent between the periods of Wei dominance and Qin supremacy. Between 363 and 221 BCE, Qin waged a total of ninety-eight wars with known causes. Of these, ninety-three (95 percent) were fought for territory and only two for dominance, two for internal strife, and one for succession. These numbers make it clear that Eastern Zhou's interstate system lacked mechanisms to counterbalance Qin's aggressive

Table 8.2. Distribution of issues that generated wars in the Age of Total War, numerically and in percentages

Issues	Wei Dominance (419–364 BCE)	Qin Supremacy (363–221 BCE)
Territory	33 (42.3%)	141 (77.5)
Dominance	19 (24.4)	11 (6.0)
Balance of power	15 (19.2)	16 (8.8)
Defending ally	6 (7.7)	7 (3.8)
Internal strife	0	3 (1.6)
Ethnicity	1 (1.3)	1 (0.5)
Succession	4 (5.1)	3 (1.6)
Total	78	182

territorial expansion. Why? The following short answer is based on a comparison with the early modern European experience.

As we saw in chapter 2, the Eastern Zhou states developed from the Western Zhou feudal arrangement. During the Western Zhou period, the relationship among the city-states (excluding Chu) was regulated by lineage law and reinforced by the Western Zhou court's mighty military presence. When the power of the Zhou court declined after it relocated its capital eastward in 770 BCE, the city-states began to fight each other. In the early Eastern Zhou period, when the Zhou court still had some degree of influence and authority over the other states, the states that had emerged as powerful from the initial conflicts tended to see and present themselves as the vanguards of the Western Zhou political order. This hegemonic system provided hegemonic stability among allies and a balance of power among the major contenders (see chapter 4). But when the hegemonic system collapsed with the worsening of the feudal crisis, ancient China's interstate politics decayed into Hobbesian anarchy.⁷⁰

Now let us compare the interstate system of ancient China and early modern Europe. In the negotiations leading to the Peace of Westphalia,⁷¹ for instance, the concepts of *legality* (in conducting the negotiation, drafting the treaties, and defining the relationships among the Holy Roman Empire, German princedoms, and free cities), *autonomy* (allowing each actor in the European state system the right to autonomy and to define the extent of its autonomy), and *balance of power*

70. Wendt (1999, chap. 6) has differentiated three different kinds of "anarchy" in international relations—Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian—and masterfully analyzed the affiliative relations between Hobbesian anarchy and the neorealism theory of international relations.

71. The peace treaty ended the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in the Holy Roman Empire and the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) between Spain and the Dutch Republic.

(not allowing any single actor to become too powerful) were guiding principles.⁷² These principles continued to regulate post-Westphalian European international relations and laid the foundation for the development of principles of sovereignty and international law,⁷³ which would become important in later centuries.⁷⁴ The existence of these principles did not prohibit ambitious European rulers from aspiring to dominance, however.⁷⁵ Yet they affected the development of international law and a diplomatic system and were operative in the wars and peace settlements after Westphalia. A dominance seeker as powerful as Louis XIV, for example, only aimed to be the arbiter of the European international society⁷⁶ and “sought preponderance *within* a pluralistic system.”⁷⁷ Despite his protestations to the contrary, Louis XIV’s aggression (e.g., France’s occupation of Strasbourg) was seen by the other European states as a violation of the Peace of Westphalia and provoked the formation of a diverse anti-French alliance that effectively checked Louis XIV’s ambition.⁷⁸

By the time of Napoleon, European warfare had changed from limited exercises into great campaigns aimed at the extermination of enemies, in this resembling China’s Warring States warfare. Unlike his predecessors, Napoleon intended to destroy existing European international society and to create a new international order in which France was at the center and dominant.⁷⁹ However,

72. Osiander (1994, pp. 16–89).

73. European international law was also rooted in the idea of “just war,” an ancient tradition handed down from Greco-Christian culture (Russell 1976; Walzer 1977; Welch 1993). This does not mean that Chinese statesmen of the Age of Total War had no sense of justice. But unlike the law-centered justice that developed in early modern Europe (Bull 1990, p. 88; Howard 1976, pp. 5–7), what developed in China was morality-centered or utility-centered justice. In the context of increasingly brutal warfare, the Confucian and Daoist conceptions of morality-centered “just war” failed to have an effectual impact on interstate politics (see chapter 7). And in that context, the Legalists promoted a kind of utility-centered justice, which only further destabilized the interstate system. For instance, the authors of *Book of Lord Shang* (2003) argued that decorum, benevolence, and moral conduct would only weaken the state and therefore should be discarded (“Nongzhan 3,” p. 20) and that “it is just to wage a war if it could end wars, and it is just to kill if it could bring an end to killings.” (“Huace 18,” p. 122). Such thinking led Chinese Legalists to conceive of law as only a set of penal codes for disciplining commoners, not as rules regulating interstate relations. Sovereignty and international law were unknown and inconceivable concepts. Without them, Legalist doctrines became pure justification for the stronger states to invade and conquer the weaker ones. See also Zhao (1996, pp. 75–82, 87–90) for the sense of just wars in Legalist thinking.

74. The traditional argument that the Peace of Westphalia established sovereignty principles is a myth. At the time of Westphalia the European international system still constituted a complex set of heterogeneous political entities that included absolutist, elective monarchy, merchant republic, aristocratic republic, and nonterritorial political actors. There was some discussion of sovereignty during this period, and to some extent the concept did regulate interactions between political entities, but sovereignty was then interpreted as “dynastic sovereignty” (Teschke 2003, p. 218). “Sovereignty” as the sovereignty of nation-states was an idea born in the nineteenth century (Osiander 2001; Spruyt 1994; Teschke 2003). It should also be noted that, before World War II, sovereignty principles were basically disregarded by the “great powers” in their dealings with the “uncivilized” world (Keene 2002; Suzuki 2009).

75. Holsti (1996, p. 3).

76. Holsti (1991, p. 68).

77. Holsti (1991, p. 225); Wolf (1968, p. 487).

78. The anti-France alliance was first composed of the Holy Roman Emperor; the kings of Spain and Sweden; the electors of Bavaria, Saxony, and the Palatinate; Savoy; and Holland. England joined after the Glorious Revolution (Kegley and Raymond 1990, p. 18).

79. Holsti (1996, p. 4).

Napoleon also championed principles of national integrity that were at odds with his imperial ambition, something that is indicative of the strong imprint of the sovereignty principle.⁸⁰ Moreover, as during the reign of Louis XIV, an anti-French alliance was formed in response to Napoleon's challenge and was sustained until the collapse of Napoleon's mighty army. Napoleonic ambition was also an anachronism in European history because by the nineteenth century the spread of nationalism had greatly increased the cost of conquering other nations, and the Europe-centered war theater was also so expansive as to make it impossible for any single state to achieve complete dominance.⁸¹ In this sense, the post-Westphalian principles were also crucial because they delayed the devolution of the European international system into Hobbesian anarchy until a large part of Eurasia was incorporated into the war theater during "the war of the nations."⁸²

The European case alone may not convince the international relations scholars of a neorealist bent of the regulative power of norms and international law on European international relations. Neorealists are surely able to produce logically compelling arguments showing that the development of early modern European international politics was at every step determined by interest-based calculations sugarcoated with certain discourses. This kind of chicken-egg debate can be avoided, and the importance of norms and institutions in international relations become more patent, when we analyze the development of early China's interstate system for contrast.

Eastern Zhou interstate politics unfolded in a society where international norms and institutions, such as sovereignty,⁸³ balance of power, and international law were never developed. In the early Eastern Zhou period (or the Age of Hegemons), the Zhou royal house still had some influence over the ducal states, and a powerful ducal state justified its dominance by claiming to be the protector of the Zhou royal house and guarantor of political order. But as the power of the Zhou royal house further declined, and as the legacy of the Western Zhou

80. Holsti (1991, p. 225).

81. Nationalism is a modern political ideology that enhances or justifies a people's self-identification within a political entity called a nation. Once a group of people acquires such an identity, they will fight for independence or self-determination if they live in a state that they see as dominated by "other" groups, or they will acquire a strong sense of pride in their own state, race, and culture, sometimes at the expense of the other states and groups. According to Benedict Anderson (1991), a nation is an imagined community, which means that nationalism is a constructed identity. Nevertheless, the construction of a national identity will be more successful when it is based on historical memory, language, and religion shared by all the people who are haphazardly drawn into the construction process.

82. Howard (1976, pp. 94–115).

83. Scholars tend to regard the states during the Age of Total War as sovereign states (e.g., Bleiker 2001, p. 181; Hui 2004, p. 176). This is a typical anachronism. During the Age of Total War, none of the warring states regarded or treated the others as sovereign, independent equals. Annexation of one state's territory by another was never regarded as a violation of interstate norm—neither by the parties involved nor in the interstate community. Hierarchy and dominance were at the core of interstate relations.

political order became increasingly irrelevant, no alternatives emerged to fill the vacuum.

In chapter 6, it was noted that, during the Age of Total War, *shi* who had proposed idealistic/moralistic interstate orders were mostly marginalized in politics (especially in the most powerful states), and the dominant ideas that governed interstate politics were Legalism and the school of Stratagem,⁸⁴ philosophical traditions that thought of interstate politics as playing out the law of the jungle.⁸⁵ In early modern European states a mix of realism and idealism in social thought and in actual practice provided a key balancing mechanism for the perpetuation of a European international society. In early modern Europe, most wars ended with negotiations leading to peace treaties that reinforced international law and the ideal of international society.⁸⁶ In China, by contrast, the total wars always ended with one or more states either achieving its strategic aims or being destroyed, defeated, or annexed. During the Age of Total War, even treaties, covenants, or interstate meetings became occasions for ruthless intrigues.⁸⁷ The “cultural realism,” which Johnson defines as a kind of minimally violent strategic culture, which later Chinese empires relied on in dealing with the outside world, was unknown and inconceivable in the Age of Total War.⁸⁸

Without norms and institutions acting as constructive forces in interstate relations, territorial greed became limitless, as the staggering increase of territory-seeking warfare during the Age of Total War reveals (table 8.2). By contrast, in Europe 24 percent of all the wars were aimed at territorial expansion between 1648 and 1713, and 26 percent between 1715 and 1814, but only 14 percent between 1815 and 1914.⁸⁹ The increase of territorial warfare in ancient China contrasts sharply with its decline in early modern Europe. These figures make clear the difficulty of having stable, trustworthy, and relatively peaceful international relations without the existence of a set of common standards of behavior.⁹⁰

84. The Legalists had never developed any concept of international law.

85. They were akin to the brutal realism advocated by modern neorealist international relations scholars. See Buzan, Jones, and Little (1993); Gilpin (1981); Jervis (1988); Keohane (1986); Mearsheimer (1994/1995); Waltz (1979). For criticism of the neorealist theories, see Bull (1977, 1990); Hall (1996); Hsiung (1997); Smith (1995); Wendt (1992, 1999); Wight (2005).

86. Holsti (1991, p. 21).

87. The following examples may give readers a sense of the cold-blooded realism dominating interstate relations during the Age of Total War. In 340 BCE, Lord Shang Yang mustered Qin troops to attack Wei. Since the Wei commander, Prince Mao, had once been Shang Yang's good friend, Shang Yang used the relationship to arrange a meeting with the prince under the false pretense of sealing a covenant to end the war. When they met, Shang Yang took the prince prisoner and defeated the Wei army by a surprise attack (*Grand Historian*, “Biography of Lord Shang,” 1959, pp. 2232–33). In 299 BCE, King Zhao of Qin invited King Huai of Chu to Wuguang to seal a covenant between their two states. Upon King Huai's arrival, King Zhao held him hostage and demanded Chu territory in exchange for the king's freedom (*Grand Historian*, “History of Chu,” reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 1727–28).

88. Johnson (1995). See also Boylan (1982) and Kierman and Fairbank (1974) for discussions of Chinese military culture.

89. Holsti (1991, pp. 49, 88, 144).

90. Hsiung (1997, p. 3).

Interstate relations during the Age of Total War were dominated by seven states, of which five were the strongest. Yet after the decline of Wei after 364 BCE, Qin became the only superpower of ancient China. According to modern neorealist international relations theory,⁹¹ this would have pushed the other six states (let's call them the "weak states" for the moment) either to form an alliance against Qin's military threat, or to jump on Qin's bandwagon. Nevertheless, by that time ancient China's interstate system was so totally anarchic that those weak states could not pursue either strategy fruitfully. The weak states could not safely ally with Qin because Qin never honored its promises to its allies, and never hesitated to attack or even subjugate its allies to advance its own strategic goals. Han and Wei were forced into alliance with Qin in 318 BCE, but Qin nevertheless attacked Han in 308 BCE and occupied Han's two strategic strongholds, Yiyang and Wusui.⁹² In 316 BCE, Qin conquered Shu, though Shu was Qin's ally at the time. In 312 BCE, to break a Qi-Chu alliance and seduce Chu into alliance with itself, Qin offered territory to Chu. Immediately after Chu broke its alliance with Qi, Qin repudiated its offer, defeated the Chu army in a series of battles, and occupied Chu's Hanzhong region.⁹³ Such examples are manifold.

With Qin's sole superpower status and highly aggressive military posture, a durable anti-Qin alliance would seem to be the only viable solution for the six weaker states, according to modern theories of international alliances.⁹⁴ And Qin's relentless aggression did compel the weak states to forge anti-Qin alliances. Before and during the War of Changping, between 261 and 259 BCE, it seemed that Qin's military could still be checked if the other six states could act in concert.⁹⁵ Yet anti-Qin alliances were always very short-lived and had no long-term effects on interstate politics.⁹⁶ In early modern Europe, aggression was regarded, among other things, as a violation of international norms. Therefore an alliance was often maintained until the aggressors were subdued, old international norms were reinstated, or new treaties were signed. But late Eastern Zhou China lacked strong institutions regulating the conduct of each state in a multistate community, and Qin's military aggression was therefore not perceived as a violation of international norms or law. Anti-Qin alliances were formed only because Qin's military successes became painfully threatening to the states

91. Jervis and Snyder (1991); Reiter and Gärtner (2001); Walt (1987, p. 17).

92. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Chu Lizi and Gan Mao;" reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2313–14). This, according to Yang (1998, pp. 367–68), pushed Han to ally with Qi and Wei for protection.

93. According to *Grand Historian* ("History of Chu"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1724), 80,000 Chu soldiers were killed in these battles.

94. Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan (1973, chap. 1); Walt (1987, p. 25).

95. For example, having formed an alliance in 288 BCE, in 287 BCE Chu, Zhao, Wei, Han, Qi, and Yan joined forces. They defeated Qin and in a peace deal forced it to return part of the territories it had occupied to Wei and Zhao. In 247 BCE, Chu, Zhao, Wei, Han, and Yan joined forces again in a last attempt to defeat Qin. The attempt failed.

96. Long-lasting interstate alliances prevailed during the Age of Hegemons. See chapter 5 and Walker (1971). It was only during the Age of Total War, when the hegemonic system and associated norms completely collapsed, that the warring states were no longer able to form any durable alliances to counterbalance a dominant power.

involved. These alliances easily broke up when Qin offered strategic retreats or concessions that made some of the states feel less threatened.⁹⁷

Without strong institutions regulating a multistate community, cold calculation and mutual distrust also governed the behavior of the six weak states, which found it impossible to trust one another and feared that one state might try to dominate the others in the anti-Qin alliance. They also frequently attacked one another for minor gains, with detrimental geopolitical consequences. Yan took Zhao's defeat by Qin at Changping as an opportunity to attack Zhao from behind.⁹⁸ As noted earlier, Chu broke its alliance with Qi in 312 BCE for a piece of territory. Chu and Yan joined the anti-Qin alliance of 318 BCE, but unenthusiastically because they had not yet been attacked by Qin. Qi also joined the anti-Qin alliance, but its main interest was to lock Qin and the Three Jin(s) in a protracted conflict, which would allow Qi to war against Yan without evoking much antagonism among the neighboring states. The six weak states formed an anti-Qin alliance again in 288 BCE, but it broke up in less than two years after Qi antagonized the other states by annexing the small state of Song.⁹⁹ Such examples are legion.¹⁰⁰

Third, without strong institutions to regulate interstate relations, the free-rider attitude (i.e., the desire to shift Qin's military aggression onto the other five states) prevailed among the six weak states. For example, in 273 BCE, after Qin defeated Wei and Han in several major battles and placed the two states under its control, it planned to turn its war machine against Chu again. Hearing this, Chu minister Huang Xie went to Qin and successfully persuaded King Zhao of Qin (r. 306–251 BCE) that Chu was Qin's natural ally and that Qin should maintain its eastward aggression (i.e., subdue Wei and Han and then Zhao and Qi). This kind of attempt to make the other states bear the burden of Qin's military aggression was common.¹⁰¹ The problem was particularly serious because the seven major states' territories were spatially configured to Qin's greatest advantage. Qin, located in the northwest, came to possess the entire western part of ancient China after it conquered Shu and Ba in 316 BCE. This geography militated against a stable

97. The six states formed an anti-Qin alliance in 288 BCE and attacked Qin in the following year. Yet as soon as Qin retreated and returned part of its conquered territory to Zhao and Wei, the allied troops ceased attacking, and internal conflicts broke up the alliance. No interstate norms were established or enforced during this allied expedition. Furthermore, Qin invaded Wei and Han immediately after the allied attack had ceased, and occupied much Wei territory. This time, the six weak states were unable to form an anti-Qin alliance, because Qi had conquered Song in 286 BCE and provoked the formation of an anti-Qi alliance by which it was almost eliminated.

98. *Grand Historian* ("History of Yan"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959).

99. In both cases, anti-Qin alliances broke immediately and anti-Qi alliances formed.

100. It is as if in World War II the United States had invaded and taken a sizable chunk of territory away from Great Britain, its ally, only because it knew that Great Britain desperately needed its help. This scenario would never have happened because of the existence and functioning of international norms, even during the most brutal war. Yet this hypothetical scenario was routine during the Age of Total War.

101. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Prince Chunshen"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2387–93).

anti-Qin alliance, because the states farther from Qin, when not yet directly threatened, were not greatly motivated to unite with the others against Qin.¹⁰² By the same token, Qin could “make friends with distant states while attacking the neighboring states” (*yuan jiao jin gong*).¹⁰³ This further reduced the inclination of states far from Qin to help defend the states under Qin’s immediate military threat. Of the six weak states, the onus of resisting Qin fell mainly upon Wei and Han in the years between 364 and 317 BCE.¹⁰⁴ Not until Wei and Han were subdued did Chu and Zhao start to feel the menace of Qin’s mighty army. As for Qi and Yan, they did not feel the danger until the final years of Qin’s ravaging conquests. Accordingly, Qi and Yan were always the least forthcoming members of several very short-lived anti-Qin alliances.

Finally, Eastern Zhou China had a much simpler system of interstate relations in comparison with its early modern European counterpart. In early modern Europe, at no time was a single state (not even Napoleon’s France) able to achieve sole superpower status. In China, however, after the decline of Wei in 364 BCE, Qin remained the only superpower. This asymmetrical power structure made it even harder for the other six weak states to form a stable alliance. Qin would break such alliances either by coercing the nearby weak states or seducing the farther states into a pro-Qin alliance (then called “horizontal alliance”). Qin maintained its alliances by domination and broke the anti-Qin alliances either by attacking the state central to those alliances or by offering concessions to the states that were less motivated to stay in the alliance. Moreover, every success of Qin’s horizontal alliance strategy further enhanced Qin’s sole superpower status, which raised the bar for the states wishing to form an anti-Qin alliance. Had Qin honored its obligations to its weaker allies, the pro-Qin alliance would have been very stable. During the Age of Total War, the weak states under Qin’s banner turned against Qin only because they were continuously double-crossed by Qin when they were its allies.

International relations scholars of the neorealism persuasion see the international order as anarchical and believe that peace depends wholly on balance of power. They argue that such balance will be created because “states almost always choose to balance against rising expansionists,”¹⁰⁵ and because a sufficient threat will always sustain a stable anti-expansionist alliance.¹⁰⁶ The foregoing analysis, however, demonstrates the importance of international norms, law, and regulatory institutions in maintaining any multistate political order. A purely anarchical

102. Initially, Qin’s military pressure was felt only by Wei and then by Han. Other states started to feel Qin’s military pressure only after Wei and Han were greatly weakened. See the next section of this chapter for more detail.

103. See Walt (1987, p. 23) for the modern relevance of this mechanism.

104. During this period, except for a skirmish between Qin and Qi in 320 BCE, Qin attacked only Wei (17 times) and Han (3 times).

105. Jervis and Snyder (1991, p. 5).

106. Reiter and Gärtner (2001, p. 1).

multistate system would only lead to the weakening of the power-balancing mechanisms and the collapse of a multistate society.¹⁰⁷

Besides the lack of norms, law, and institutions for regulating interstate relations, a few other conditions of ancient China's interstate relations also facilitated Qin's conquest. In comparison with early China, Europe's wars were fought over much more issues in an ever changing manner. Before the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, European wars might be sparked by religious hatreds, conflicts, dynastic claims, conflicts between nascent states and established empires, and other dynamics that were not issues in Eastern Zhou China. After the Peace of Westphalia, although some war-inducing issues (primarily religious rancor) declined or disappeared, new *causae belli*, such as rights of commerce and navigation, colonial competition, national liberation, national unification, and ideological liberation, gradually emerged. Based on Holsti's calculation,¹⁰⁸ the number of issues that sparked wars in Europe increased from thirteen in 1648–1713 and fourteen in 1715–1814 to twenty-three in 1815–1914. By contrast, the war-triggering issues in Eastern Zhou China declined from eleven in the Age of Hegemons to seven by the Age of Total War. Among the very small number of war-triggering issues, the ancient Chinese states increasingly concentrated on territorial expansion. Ancient Chinese states' high focus on territory warfare certainly facilitated the Qin unification.

In comparison with early modern Europe, ancient China had a much smaller war theater. In China, the size of the war theater had stabilized at approximately 1.5 to two million square kilometers by the early sixth century BCE, after Wu and Yue were fully engaged. This war theater largely extended between twenty-eight and forty degrees latitude. The climate during the Eastern Zhou period was slightly warmer than it is today (see chapter 3), meaning that the entire Eastern Zhou war theater was comfortably located in the temperate zone. Moreover, it was highly self-contained; after the rise of Wu and Yue, no major new states or regions were ever added to the roster.

In Europe, by contrast, the size of the war theater kept expanding.¹⁰⁹ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the European war theater was already several times bigger than its ancient China counterpart. By the seventeenth century, when colonial competition and commercial navigation became issues, the European war theater further expanded. And in the eighteenth century, Russia and the Baltic states became part of the European homeland and thus joined the competition.¹¹⁰ By then the European homeland war theater

107. Kegley and Raymond (1990).

108. Holsti (1991).

109. Bull and Watson (1984).

110. Watson (1984).

(i.e., excluding wars fought in North America and other colonies) extended west–east from Britain to Russia and north–south from northern Europe to the southern Mediterranean, an area many times the size of the Eastern Zhou China war theater. Napoleon had to transport troops and supplies in much the same way Qin had done, and with similar efficiency, two thousand years earlier. The sheer size of the war theater, therefore, militated against the realization of any imperial dreams in early modern Europe. Moreover, ancient Chinese wars were all fought in the temperate zone, but the early modern European war theater encompassed regions with very different temperatures, precipitation levels, and diseases. Russia could defeat Napoleon by simply avoiding head-on battles and letting Napoleon's overstretched troops freeze to death in Russia's arctic winter weather. The sheer size of the European war theater and these climate differences often turned European imperial dreams into nightmares. In the much smaller and self-contained war theater of ancient China, unification was logistically more feasible.¹¹¹

In nineteenth-century Europe, nationalism acted as another check on imperial ambitions. An invading army inevitably faced popular resistance in the form of noncooperation and guerrilla warfare, which exponentially increased the cost of dominance.¹¹² When a state was conquered in Eastern Zhou China, no such large-scale popular resistance followed. War was only the rulers' business.

Not only did the states of Eastern Zhou China receive no *popular* support born of the emotion of nationalism, neither could they retain *elite* loyalty, for the same reason. As noted earlier, during the Age of Total War, capable politicians and generals readily changed employers, moving to a different (sometimes an enemy) state for the same or a similar or better position.¹¹³ The rulers of the new state rarely distrusted these newcomers, and the newcomers did not seem bothered by feelings of disloyalty. The following capable officials and generals of Qin, most decisive contributors to Qin's success, were all from other states: Shang Yang, Sima Cuo, and Lü Buwei (from Wei), Wei Liao, Zhang Yi, and Fan Jü (Wei), Wei Rang (Chu), Meng Ao (Qi), Cai Ze (Yan), Hanfeizi (Han), Li Si (Shang Cai), Gan Mao (Xia Cai). This lack of loyalty to a state greatly weakened the balance-of-power mechanisms in the early China interstate system and facilitated China's unification as well.

111. Self-contained geography certainly facilitated China's unification and many reunifications. But geography alone cannot explain China's prolonged unity during the later dynasties. Both the Indian subcontinent and the Indo-China peninsula were also geographically self-contained, but were never unified politically and culturally as China was.

112. Hui (2005, pp. 132–33) noticed the importance of Spanish guerrilla warfare against the French but failed to see its importance in perpetuating a multistate system.

113. See Bai (1998, pp. 9–12) and Yu (2000) for a fuller discussion of the total absence of nationalism and patriotism among the elite. Recall that Wu Qi was appointed Chu's chief minister after defecting from Wei. Eastern Zhou history presents many such examples.

Eastern Zhou warfare, then, in many ways resembled the fighting among early twentieth-century Chinese warlords. It bears more resemblance to civil wars than to warfare between sovereign nations. Thus, “interstate relations” rather than “international relations” better characterize the relationships among ancient China’s states.

THE QIN CONQUEST

Some historians believe that Qin was able to unify China because the people in all the states wanted to see a unified state: “Widespread support of the long-expected unification was a greater factor in Qin’s final success than sheer force.”¹¹⁴ It has also been argued that peasant life had suffered greatly from the incessant warfare and that the merchants supported unification to achieve a wider market.¹¹⁵ The “people’s will” argument is problematic, because it is hard to see how this sentiment, even if it existed, could have been transformed into state military power. It is also hard to imagine why the people of each state would endorse unification, instead of at once adopting peaceful coexistence. For the merchants, unification was not even beneficial because the state in a unified China was more capable of crushing merchants’ interests than were the individual states in a multistate system.¹¹⁶

In addition to interstate politics, we should stress again the contributions of the Legalist programs to China’s unification (see chapter 7). The waves of Legalist reform, occurring roughly between 430 and 350 BCE, changed the nature of war in two ways: wars of much larger scale and longer duration became common; and once freed from the problems associated with the feudal crisis, the states became territory hungry. Increased capacity in conjunction with new purpose resulted in total war after 419 BCE (but particularly after 350 BCE). During the entire Eastern Zhou era, of the twenty wars reportedly costing over 20,000 casualties, the earliest occurred in 405 BCE, the last in 245 BCE, and fifteen of them were clustered in the sixty-one years between 317 and 256 BCE. With continual wars on this scale, ancient China was incapable of hosting multiple competing states for long.

This analysis, however, does not explain why it was Qin rather than another state that eventually won the centuries-long conflict. During most of the Eastern Zhou period, Qin was only a second-rank state. Qin rose to dominance as late as the mid-fourth century BCE, and its total victory was not inevitable until Qin defeated Zhao in the decisive War of Changping. It has been argued that Qin was able to conquer China because its aristocracy was weak, which allowed its

114. Pines (2012, p. 20).

115. Yang (1998); Zhou (1999).

116. Few politicians or Legalists had a clear vision of total conquest until very late in the Age of Total War. When Duke Xiao started to transform Qin in 356 and 350 BCE, for instance, his vision was only to regain Duke Mu’s glory, not to establish a unified empire (Lin 1981, p. 176).

rulers to force through more thorough Legalist reforms. This argument rings truest when one compares Qin's Legalist reforms with those of Qi and Chu. Qin was founded in 770 BCE when King Ping of Zhou bestowed the land west of Qi Mountain on Duke Xiang of Qin (see chapter 3). The fief was mostly an empty gift, because much of this land was occupied by the semipastoral Rong people, who had migrated there from the north. From 770 BCE on, Qin had to battle the Rong to secure its position in the region. Besides the battles, Qin's frequent contact with the Rong people allowed it to acquire much non-Zhou culture, which prompted rulers of other states sometimes to regard Qin as "barbarian." The semipastoral peoples of the north had very simple governments, far less bound by the complicated rituals and strong aristocracies typical of the Chinese states. There is also evidence that Qin's governments made conscious efforts to learn from the Rong people.¹¹⁷ This might have contributed to Qin's weak aristocratic tradition and its more centralized government.

Qin's centralized state and weak aristocratic tradition must also have had something to do with Duke Wu's (r. 697–678 BCE) extraordinary action. Duke Wu of Qin was installed by the heads of three aristocratic lineages after they assassinated Duke Chu (r. 703–698). If such an incident had occurred in any other state, the newly installed duke would usually have been controlled by the aristocrats who enthroned him, or at least would have found it necessary to keep a close relationship with the aristocrats and the lineages that supported him. But after consolidating his power, Duke Wu killed not only the three aristocrats who had installed him but also the members of their lineages. His cunning ruthlessness not only eliminated three powerful aristocratic lineages, but also demonstrated for the benefit of later Qin rulers how to deal with disloyal aristocratic families and served to warn the aristocracy of the danger of meddling in palace affairs. During the reign of Duke Wu, Qin also adopted the county system, possibly administrated by state-appointed officials, to govern newly acquired territories, signifying Duke Wu's determination to centralize state power. Finally, Duke Wu adopted the practice of burying the living with the dead. This practice, obviously bearing the imprint of the northern pastoral culture, was considered by the rulers of most other states to be an act of savage cruelty. Since those who were buried alive were often powerful state officials, Duke Wu may have introduced the practice as one more measure to strengthen state power.¹¹⁸ Duke Wu's

117. *Grand Historian* ("History of Qin"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 192–93) tells that Duke Qin of Mu had tried very hard to woo You Yu (a Rong minister) to his service in order to learn Rong practices.

118. Nearing his death, Duke Mu of Qin ordered three generals from the Yusi family to be buried alive. Likely, they were chosen because the duke was worried about their influence in the government after his death (see *Book of Odes*, "Yellow Bird"; reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980, p. 273). The practice of burying the living with the dead was terminated in Qin during the reign of Duke Xian (r. 384–362 BCE; *Grand Historian*, "History of Qin," reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 201). This might not be a coincidence, because by that time, Qin's Legalist reforms had started to take shape and the practice no longer served its purpose.

state-centralization measures had lasting impact. For 250 years following his reign, not a single duke in Qin was killed, whereas in other states, multiple kings and dukes were killed by members of the aristocratic lineages.¹¹⁹

Qin's strong-state and weak-aristocracy tradition, beginning almost with the granting of the fief, must have expedited Legalist reform in Qin. But in comparing Qin with former superpower Wei, it is hard to determine based on the existing evidence whether Qin's Legalist reforms were in fact more successful than Wei's. After all, Shang Yang, architect of the Qin reforms, was killed by Qin aristocrats immediately after the death of Duke Xiao, proof indeed of the aristocracy's resistance to the Legalist measures. None of the major architects of Legalism in Wei, however—Li Kui, Wu Qi, and Ximen Bao included—was assassinated (or even the object of an attempted assassination) after the death of Duke Wei, though each had implemented radical changes detrimental to the interests of the aristocrats. Moreover, when Shang Yang left Wei for Qin and became chief architect of Qin's reforms, he brought with him legal codes written by Li Kui. So Shang Yang's measures were largely modeled after those of Wei, where Legalism may have taken thorough hold.

Jin (the predecessor of Wei, Zhao, and Han) had a powerful aristocracy. But by the time the three surviving lineages had established the Three Jin states and begun the Legalist reforms, the aristocracy of Wei (as well as of Zhao and Han) was quite weak. The dukes and the *shi* in the three new states had all learned a hard lesson about the dangers of a powerful aristocracy. That may be why leading Legalist thinkers all originated from or in the vicinity of the Three Jin states.¹²⁰ The weakness of the aristocracy in Wei perhaps explains why none of its major Legalist reformers was killed by retaliating aristocrats after their patron's (Duke Wen's) death.

After the Qin conquest, the First Emperor destroyed the historical records of all the other states. Today, we know much more about the Legalist changes in Qin than in any of the other states, which may give the impression that Qin's Legalism went deeper than that of any other state. Qin's military success alone, however, is not sufficient proof that Legalism was more successful in Qin than in Wei. New and more solid evidence is needed.

The success of Legalist reform also could not have been the only reason for Qin's military triumph. Qin had other advantages over the other warring states. Being westernmost, and with the highest elevation of all the states, Qin's many rivers flowed east into the Wei River, which continued on eastward. This afforded fast transport for Qin's troops and supplies into the war zone.¹²¹

119. During the Spring and Autumn period, almost 50 percent of the dukes in Lu, Jin, and Qi were killed by members of the aristocratic lineages (see figure 5.1).

120. Rong (1944); Yan (1991, pp. 45–46).

121. The Wei River gradually widened east of the Qin capital, Xianyang, and was ideal for transportation.

Having conquered Ba and Shu in 316 BCE, Qin was able to send its military downstream on the Yangzi to attack Chu from rear.¹²² The same geography obviously hampered the rest of the states' supply lines, disadvantaging them in a prolonged battle with Qin. Qin's territory was also easy to defend, centered as it was on Guanzhong Plain (in present-day Shaanxi, in the vicinity of the later Chang'an). The plain, a basin enclosed by mountains, was at that time only accessible via a few passes.¹²³ Qin's opponents were mainly located in the east and southeast. Those regions were easily defensible. Qin's eastern territory was accessible both north and south of the Yellow River. From north of the Yellow River, enemy troops would have to cross both the Yellow and Luo Rivers. Moreover, while the Yuncheng Plain was east of the Yellow River, the land between those rivers was made up of loess tableland, cut by numerous canyons and cliffs—natural moats that fenced out invaders. South of the Yellow River ran the Funiu and Qinling mountain ranges, and between them and the Yellow River is a corridor through which troops could pass. But that corridor, which extended several hundred kilometers from Luoyang to Huayin runs uphill the entire way from east to west, which tired out troops and their supply trains. It also narrowed sharply in several places, such as the Hangu Pass, which provided ideal locations for Qin to set up almost impregnable defenses. Geopolitically, whereas the other states all faced strong enemies on least on two fronts, Qin's westernmost position made it possible to maintain defenses on its east side alone.¹²⁴ As mentioned earlier, Qin's westernmost location, by making it seem much less threatening to farther-away states, also worked against the formation of a stable anti-Qin alliance.¹²⁵

When the Age of Total War began, Qin was still a second-class state interested only in the politics west of the Yellow River. If Wei had not decided to attack Qin but had gone after other states instead, Qin might well have remained asleep until it was too late. But, having chosen to expand westward, Wei no longer had that strategic choice. Qin was also lucky in that Wei did manage to conquer a large portion of Qin's territory, thus creating a deep sense of crisis in Qin and clearing

122. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Zhang Yi"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2290) records that the ships that Qin sailed downstream to attack Chu could travel over 150 kilometers a day and each could carry fifty warriors or grain to feed fifty warriors for three months.

123. *Guanzhong* literally means "a plain amid the mountain passes." The four most viable passes were Hangu in the east, Wu in the south, San in the West, and Xiao in the north (Shi 1963, p. 26).

124. To be sure, Qin was not completely worry free on its northwest front. Several nomadic or pastoral polities, especially Yiqu, sometimes probed Qin's northwest border. But Qin's nomadic pastoral enemies were weak. Save for one or two minor setbacks, the historical records show that Qin completely dominated its nomadic pastoral neighbors. In 362 and 272 BCE, Qin conquered Huan and Yiqu, the two nomadic pastoral states at Qin's back.

125. Some scholars argue that Qin's military success had a lot to do with Qin's more advanced iron manufacture and other military technologies. Based on more systematic evidence, Keightley (1976) asserts that Qin's iron and weapons were no better than those of the other states, and that bronze weapons, if properly cast, were actually harder than many kinds of iron and even mild steel. During the Age of Total War, the material of choice for weapons was bronze.

the way for Legalist changes, but did not destroy Qin altogether. Wei's decision to move against Qin only awakened a sleeping giant.

Located amid pastoral and seminomadic tribes and states, Qin soldiers had always been—of necessity—very capable fighters. Equally important, because Qin had never been at the center of Chinese civilization, its public education system was underdeveloped. None of the ancient China philosophies originated in Qin either;¹²⁶ nor had it ever produced a great number of talented, visionary indigenous politicians. Yet this weakness had an unforeseen positive consequence: it motivated Qin to open its doors to outsiders. Beginning with the reign of Duke Mu, Qin had tried hard to attract talented people from other states. During the Age of Total War, when private education was booming and other states were producing or even overproducing scores of talented people, Qin's long-standing open-door policy made it extremely attractive to ambitious young men trying to prove themselves. These nonnatives were important to Qin's military success. Hong Liangji (1746–1809), a prominent scholar of the Qing dynasty, once pointed out that most of Qin's high officials were not native born.¹²⁷ Indeed, prominent Qin politicians mostly came from the other states.

Qin's Legalist changes began during the reign of Duke Xian (383–362 BCE). Though at first only a limited exercise, it nevertheless helped Qin to gradually abandon its merely defensive position with respect to military confrontations with Wei. After Qin had carried out more systematic reforms under Lord Shang Yang, Qin's agriculture and military further developed. Ever since the mid-fourth century BCE, when Wei was twice defeated by Qi and sank to a second-class power, Qin emerged as the sole superpower in the warring state system. Yet, Qin's initial military goals remained modest. Between 366 and 322 BCE, apart from two wars with Han, the rest of the sixteen wars that Qin fought on its western front were against Wei. Wei lost all of them. In addition to the war of 366 BCE, when Wei reportedly suffered 60,000 casualties, between 332 and 330 BCE, Wei also lost all of its land west of the Yellow River to Qin, as well as 45,000 soldiers.¹²⁸

As Qin gradually consolidated the territories it had gained, its ambition grew. After 320 BCE, Qin started to attack other states, increasing both casualties and the scale and duration of wars. Therefore, as stated earlier, fifteen of twenty wars with more than 20,000 casualties happened between 317 and

126. Yan (1991, chap. 2).

127. Yang (1998, p. 445).

128. The death toll recorded in *Grand Historian's* "History of Qin" (reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 206) is 80,000, but 45,000 is the number recorded in *Grand Historian's* "History of Wei" (reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1848). Possibly, when writing the "History of Qin," Sima based the number on Qin sources, but when writing the "History of Wei," he relied upon Wei accounts. The real death toll could very well be somewhere between the two figures.

256 BCE. Of these fifteen wars, thirteen were fought between Qin and another state during Qin's east-and-southward expansion. Historians have cast doubt on the recorded troop and casualty figures.¹²⁹ Although one does see considerable exaggeration in the ancient Chinese texts, in my view, it is likely that there were extremely high death tolls in some wars during the Age of Total War. Zhao is recorded to have lost over 400,000 men during the War of Changping (259–261 BCE). This figure, the highest war-casualty record of the time, seems dubious; still, the death toll must have been extremely high. In both states, too, the war caused severe economic crises.¹³⁰ During the final showdown, King Zhao of Qin mobilized all males aged fifteen and older and brought them to the front himself.¹³¹ Only by going to such lengths was Qin able to win this arguably most crucial war. It seems hardly coincidental that most of the reported high-casualty wars occurred between 317 and 256 BCE: Before 317 BCE, Qin had not yet grown to its full strength, and after 256 BCE, few states had the military power to resist Qin. Close correspondence between the recorded death tolls and the historical developments permits a certain confidence in the numbers, at least in relative terms. Scholars who have seriously doubted the recorded numbers of the armies and casualties in the ancient Chinese texts may have overlooked the fact that several hundred years of war, particularly after the Legalist reforms, had turned most of the warring states into war machines. The organizational capacity of the warring states at the time—the canals they dug, the roads they constructed, the great walls they built—would not be seen again in China for centuries to come. In sum, the army sizes and death-toll figures may be exaggerated, but that the death tolls of the Age of Total War were indeed very high should not be disputed.

If we believe the recorded death tolls, we can see that in the sixty-one years between 317 and 256 BCE, close to 1.5 million warriors in the six states were eliminated by the Qin army. Such a loss created a demographic disaster in the other states: they were unable to reproduce their fighting strength, and the psychological trauma was devastating for civilians as well as the surviving soldiers. After 256 BCE, the other states' determination to resist Qin was greatly diminished. The time was ripe for unification, a mission that fell to the First Emperor of Qin. The final conquest drive started in 229 BCE. In eight years, Qin annexed the six warring states one by one, and in 221 BCE, Qi surrendered to Qin. A unified empire had been established on Chinese soil.

129. Lewis (1999, pp. 625–26), for example, argues that the size of armies in ancient Chinese texts is “purely notional and serve[s] only as rhetorical terms to suggest great size” and that the war casualties were “doubtless inflated.”

130. Yang (1998, p. 415).

131. *Grand Historian* (“Biographies of Bai Qi and Wang Jian”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2334).

SUMMARY

Seven states emerged to become major figures in interstate warfare during the Age of Total War, five of which, Qin, Wei, Qi, Zhao, and Chu, were significantly more powerful than the other two, Han and Yan. Historians tend to portray the interstate politics of the time as being dominated first by Wei. When Wei declined about the mid-fourth century BCE, Qin and Qi became the superpowers. Not until Qi was defeated by Yan in 284 BCE did Qin become the only superpower in ancient China. This chapter, based on war data and other evidence, shows that interstate politics during the Age of Total War was dominated solely by Wei and then by Qin, and that Qin was sole superpower after Wei's decline in the mid-fourth century BCE.

The chapter explored the reasons behind Wei's decline; the inability of Qi, Chu, and Zhao to compete with Qin after Wei's decline; and Qin's increasing dominance. In a nutshell, Wei lost out because of its poor geopolitical position, which worsened after it alienated its two old allies Zhao and Han. Qi was never able to fully transform its wealth into military power, because Qi's highly eclectic intellectual atmosphere nurtured a balanced view of politics that hampered the implementation of radical Legalist measures like those that Shang Yang and Li Si had put into practice in Qin. Chu was reduced from its earlier superpower status during the Age of Hegemon to a large but militarily weak state during the Age of Total War, largely because its anti-reform aristocratic class remained strong. Zhao was a militarily powerful state, but its geopolitical position was less favorable and its arable land less fertile than those of many other states. Relative to the other states Qin's geopolitical and geographical positions were the most ideal. Equally important, Qin's aristocratic tradition was very weak, and its policy of importing talent and instrumentally effective ideas and institutions from the other states was very strong. Both factors facilitated radical Legalist reforms in Qin that few states (perhaps not even Wei) could match, and allowed Qin to maintain its superpower status beginning in the mid-fourth century BCE.

Nevertheless, for almost a century, Qin would have been unable to match the other states if the latter had united under an anti-Qin banner. How, then, did Qin manage to conquer all the states and unify China? Ever since the collapse of the hegemonic interstate system in the sixth century BCE, the norms and institutions that had once regulated interstate relations gradually lost their relevance. By the Age of Total War, the interstate system had sunk into Hobbesian anarchy. Without norms and institutions acting as a regulatory force, an anti-Qin alliance could not be maintained because the parties to it did not trust one another, often disregarded each other's interests, and each wanted the others to bear the brunt of Qin's assault. Moreover, Qin could break any anti-Qin alliance by making deals with the states that benefited less from the alliance and then defeating them and the others one by one. In short, almost like a "controlled experiment," the

Chinese interstate system demonstrates that no interstate alliance could survive in the absence of mutual trust, and ironically, that Hobbesian anarchy became the vehicle whereby one state achieved complete domination.

Qin's success was also fostered by two other conditions that the early modern European international system did not share. First, the war theater of Eastern Zhou China was less than two million square kilometers and entirely located in the temperate zone. With Qin's greatly expanded military power after the Legalist reform, the stage was simply too small to accommodate more than one "tiger."¹³² Second, neither nationalism nor patriotism emerged in Eastern Zhou China, despite the incessant warfare. Talented individuals were inclined to leave their natal states for better opportunities in bigger and stronger states, and the masses did not care who ruled them. Both attitudes greatly lowered the cost of conquering another state and contributed to Qin's victory.

132. "Two tigers cannot coexist in a single mountain" is a Chinese proverb.

Western Han and the Advent of the Confucian-Legalist State

After the Qin conquest, incessant interstate warfare was no longer the engine of social change. Yet, in the short time between 221 and 140 BCE, China experienced the founding and collapse of the Qin dynasty, the first large-scale peasant rebellion, the creation of the Han dynasty and the prevalence and waning of Huang-Lao doctrines as principles of governance,¹ conflicts between centralized bureaucratic and decentralized princely kingdoms, and finally, the emergence of imperial Confucianism as the dominant political ideology.² The rapid social change of this period can be best understood as the consequence of an unstable political crystallization resulting from East Zhou warfare. The synergistic relationships between Legalist reforms and war mobilization during the Age of Total War greatly enhanced Qin's governing capacity and enabled the Qin ruler to establish an empire whose government relied largely on stringent laws and harsh administration rather than cooperation between the state and the elites.³ Therefore, the political system that coalesced after the Qin conquest, despite a mighty facade, was intrinsically unstable. The major developments of these eighty years were the repercussions of this unstable political synthesis, and they underlay the eventual formation of the Confucian-Legalist state, a highly stable government system that brought together political and ideological actors, harnessed military power, and marginalized economic power. In this chapter, I analyze the historical developments in these eighty years and beyond, as well as the nature and structure of the resultant Confucian-Legalist state.

1. The Huang-Lao philosophy popular during the early Western Han dynasty upheld some key ideas expressed in *Laozi* (reproduced in Feng 1996), but also incorporated elements of other ancient philosophies, including Legalism and Confucianism. This highly eclectic philosophy strongly influenced most early Western Han thinkers. Huang-Lao elements can be seen to color the thought of famous figures such as Jia Yi (200–168 BCE), Lu Jia (ca. 240–170 BCE), and Sima Qian, whose works contain a Confucian moral core as well. See Han (2005, pp. 121–45) for an excellent discussion of Huang-Lao philosophy during the early Western Han dynasty.

2. Fairbank's (2006, pp. 62–63) understanding of imperial Confucianism differs slightly from mine. Whereas Fairbank sees imperial Confucianism as "a Legalist-Confucian amalgam," this author sees it as an eclectic Han dynasty synthesis of ancient China's philosophies, with Confucianism at its core (discussed below).

3. Loewe (1994, p. 85).

THE QUICK DEMISE OF THE QIN DYNASTY

When Qin unified China in 221 BCE, its ruler declared himself First Emperor, expecting his heirs to carry on as Second Emperor, Third Emperor, and so on, through endless generations.⁴ Ironically, in 206 BCE, only fifteen years after unification and less than four years after the First Emperor's death, the Qin dynasty was overthrown amid waves of uprisings led by peasants as well as by elite members of the six vanquished warring states.

Historians have attributed Qin's early downfall to a variety of factors: the sudden death of the First Emperor and ensuing palace intrigues, the regime's brutal repressiveness and the rebellions it sparked, the widespread anti-Qin sentiments among the peoples of the six newly conquered states, and the overextension of the empire's resources.⁵ These might all have contributed; but the key element in Qin's early overthrow, and indeed in each of these individual factors, is that after unification the Qin rulers became overconfident about the effectiveness of the organizational capacity and the harsh ruling techniques they had acquired during the Age of Total War. The bureaucratic reach and military might of the Qin state also freed it from checks and balances by other societal forces, and consequently, the state was unable to establish a ruling ideology that could serve as the basis of cooperation with the society's elite.

Qin had conquered the other states and made them into an empire by following highly instrumental Legalist principles: organizing the whole of its society under a centralized bureaucracy that tightly controlled its population; digging canals and building extensive road networks in support of its armies; killing captives wholesale and even burying captured soldiers alive to instill terror in the fighting populations of other states; employing ultra-rationalist strategems and deceptions to break alliances among enemy states. The more success the Qin military achieved in this way, the more confident the Qin rulers became about the effectiveness of Legalist measures in controlling the masses and silencing opposing voices among the state's elite. In other words, by the time of unification, Qin had already developed into a state that based its rule more on stringent control of society than on cooperation with the society. The key element in bringing about the quick collapse of the Qin dynasty was, therefore, its very strength. Legalist transformations gave the Qin tremendous capacity to penetrate and reorganize society. But, for the first time in Chinese history, state power was no longer effectively checked by societal forces or legitimized by norms that encouraged any form of state-society cooperation. The outcome of these political negatives, as Chinese and world history has repeatedly shown, could only be disastrous.

4. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of the First Emperor"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 236).

5. Bodde (1986, pp. 85–90); Lao (2006, pp. 93–112); F. Li (1985); Lin (2003, chaps. 3–4); Ming (2006); Yang (1994); Zhou (2000, chap. 3).

Qin rule, however, was not without its nuances. The First Emperor was not fool enough to base his rule entirely on the harsh Legalist penal law. After unification, the First Emperor appointed learned scholars from different intellectual traditions to the highly prestigious post of court Erudite (*boshi*), as a way to co-opt them.⁶ He traveled to different parts of China and inscribed lengthy statements eulogizing his virtue and achievement on steles during the trips. Finally, he adopted the conquest order theory⁷ and conducted *feng* and *shan* rites,⁸ all to buttress the legitimacy of the empire.

The First Emperor's own worldview seems to have been a highly syncretic mix of common traditions in ancient China and Legalism, which provided him with an effective *modus operandi* and a justification of his draconian rule. On his five tours of his empire, he ordered stone inscriptions to be placed in various locations, on which were emblazoned not only his practical measures, but also his encouragement of Confucian ethics.⁹ Surviving Qin legal documents also reveal that some unmistakably Confucian family ethics found their way into Qin law.¹⁰

Yet the inscriptions do not undermine the traditional conviction that the First Emperor was primarily a Legalist,¹¹ or that Qin's major institutional framework

6. As Qin conquered the other states, some *shi*, whose main philosophical inclinations were obviously not Legalist, nevertheless went over to Qin's side and for a time may even have sincerely tried to serve their new master. Many were from Qi, the only major state that had surrendered to Qin without serious resistance. Qin's peaceful annexation of Qi may have tempered local resentment and made it easier for Qi elite to cooperate with the new regime.

7. The conquest order theory holds that history develops cyclically through five phases (*qi*): earth, wood, metal, fire, and water. The waxing of one form of *qi* at a given time heralds the dawn of a new phase. According to the theory, four dynasties existed before Qin and each of them correlated with one form of *qi* (the Yellow Emperor with earth; the Xia dynasty with wood; the Shang dynasty with metal; and the Zhou dynasty with fire). Qin was able to replace the Zhou dynasty and rule China because the *qi* of water was rising. Since in the theory water corresponds to the color black, the First Emperor and his officials dressed in black and used black pennants (*Grand Historian*, "Biography of the First Emperor"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 237). Even the murals painted in the Qin palaces used black as their principal color theme (*Qindu xianyang disanhao gongdian jianzhu yizhi fajue jianbao* 1980). See Nylan (2010) for a very recent discussion of the topic.

8. The so-called *feng* and *shan* rites were held in 219 BCE (Lai 2007; Loewe 2005). Supposedly, the *feng* rite to heaven was conducted atop Mount Tai (in present-day Shandong) in the conquered state of Qi, and the *shan* rite to the earth on a lesser peak (Liangfu) at the foot of Mount Tai (Bokenkamp 2002, p. 387). The rites were conceived during the latter part of the Age of Total War, or possibly during the Qin dynasty through a fusion of several earlier rituals, and signified "the attainment of world rulership and universal peace" (Lewis 1999b, p. 314).

9. These stone inscriptions evince a mixture of Legalist and Confucian doctrine. In the Langya (in present-day Shandong) inscription of 214 BCE: "His Emperorship has corrected and equalized law and regulations . . . His sage-like wisdom is humane (*ren*) and righteous (*li*) . . . He unifies the measuring and writing systems . . . His achievement surpasses that of the Five Sage Emperors." The Kuaiji (in present-day Zhejiang) inscription of 211 BCE contains the following quintessential Confucian exhortations: "A widow who has a son and remarries dishonors the dead and is unchaste. Inner and outer quarters [of a house] should be separate to prevent lewdness and licentiousness . . . If a married woman runs away [from her first husband] and remarries, her sons are forbidden to consider her their mother" (*Grand Historian*, "Biography of the First Emperor"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 262). See Wang (2002). See also Kern (2000) for an excellent analysis of the values expressed in the stone inscriptions.

10. The Qin documents unearthed at Shuihudi contain several legal texts upholding Confucian values (Hulsewé 1985).

11. Mao Zedong's writings contain a surprising amount of Confucian doctrines, approvingly quoted. Nevertheless, Mao was resolutely anti-Confucian throughout his entire career.

and state policies were Legalist.¹² The non-Legalist elements the First Emperor incorporated into his governance pertained mostly to rituals and family ethics; in no way did they palliate or limit the Legalist institutional framework. Moreover, unlike the Western Zhou Mandate of Heaven, which legitimized the ruler but at the same time required him to respect historical precedents and warned him to care for his subjects lest he be overthrown (chapter 2), the conquest order theory and the *feng* and *shan* rites promoted by the First Emperor, though by no means Legalistic, were a kind of legitimizing tool that invoked myths but did little to constrain the ruler's behavior. They could, therefore, be appropriated by any ruler, whether of a Legalist, Confucian, or Daoist stripe.¹³ In short, the First Emperor, while claiming legitimacy, never for a moment softened his relentless harshness and repression.¹⁴

The First Emperor believed wholeheartedly in magicians and their promises to find the elixir of immortality for him (despite their unceasing deceptions). This obsession with the elixir of immortality was shared by many emperors of later dynasties, regardless of their political orientation, and it did not greatly affect the way he ruled.

The First Emperor established a highly elaborate bureaucratic empire, in which an inordinate amount of power and authority resided in himself. He also imposed a uniform Chinese writing system and standardized China's roads, currency, and systems of measurement. Moreover, though he recruited talented people of differing convictions to be part of his regime, he never allowed them to challenge his core Legalist institutions and politics. A quintessential example: When Chunyu Yue, a Qi native, suggested that the First Emperor turn Qin's centralized bureaucratic system into a feudal system similar to that of the Western Zhou period, the First Emperor not only disagreed, but instead followed his chief chancellor Li Si's suggestion that he confiscate and burn books that he regarded as heterodox.¹⁵

12. As revealed in the records of the Shuihudi Qin legal documents, even when the Qin state's laws or policies contained non-Legalist elements, they were implemented in a draconian Legalist manner (*Shuihudi qinmu zhujian* 1978).

13. For example, Emperor Wu of the Western Han dynasty, strong-willed but also committed to promoting Confucian teachings, also conducted *feng* and *shan* rites in 110 BCE.

14. For example, according to *Grand Historian* ("Biography of the First Emperor"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 257–58), the First Emperor once expressed displeasure when he saw that the carriage of his chief chancellor (Li Si) was accompanied by a large entourage. Soon after, he noticed that Li Si had significantly downsized his entourage. Realizing that someone close to him must have informed Li Si of his comment, the First Emperor killed everyone who had been with him on that day. Afterward, as the story goes, two magicians whom the First Emperor trusted ran away. The First Emperor ordered an investigation of all the people who had any relations with the two magicians, which resulted in the execution of some 460 individuals. Bodde (1986, pp. 95–96), among a few other early China scholars, has argued that this story is apocryphal. Most Chinese historians, however, believe it. In light of numerous other terrible and more verifiable actions, some semblance of truth attaches to the story. At the very least, it tells us that non-Legalist *shi* who served the First Emperor had become increasingly appalled by the First Emperor and his regime.

15. The burned books included all copies of the *Book of Odes* (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980), *Book of Documents* (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980), and the writings of various philosophical schools. The First Emperor also decreed that those who dared discuss the contents of these books would be executed and their corpses publicly displayed, those who criticized the present by comparison with the past would be killed along with their

Let us now catalog some of the most important “projects” that the First Emperor undertook, because not only can they be verified, they also better reveal the empire’s Legalist nature. During his reign, the First Emperor dismantled the defensive wall systems and roadblocks put up by the other warring states and greatly expanded the existing road and canal systems to facilitate extensive communication and transportation.¹⁶ He relocated both elites and commoners from the conquered states, for reasons ranging from his desire to undermine the old elite power bases by placing them under better surveillance, to build up the labor force in a particular region to increase agricultural production or protection of the frontiers.¹⁷ He dispatched large numbers of troops on several major military expeditions into modern China’s southern Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Guangxi provinces and incorporated these regions into the empire.¹⁸ He sent 300,000 soldiers to attack Xiongnu nomads in the north, pushing them out of the agricultural zone, and in the meantime constructed the Great Walls to block their re-entry.¹⁹ He ordered the construction of hundreds of imperial palaces along the Wei River valley²⁰ and a giant mausoleum for himself in present-day Shaanxi province. Finally, as noted earlier, to display his accomplishments, the First Emperor led a huge entourage on five tours of China. He died in 210 BCE, during the last trip to the south.

There is no need to emphasize the amount of manpower and resources required for such projects as the Great Walls and the long-distance road and canal systems, and for the success of the large-scale military campaigns in remote areas. It is also unnecessary to stress the magnitude of the hardship caused and the resentment induced by such actions as forced large-scale migrations. To convey a sense of how the First Emperor treated his subjects, let us focus on a seemingly minor project, his own mausoleum.

relatives, . . . and those who did not burn the forbidden texts within thirty days after the order was issued would be tattooed like criminals and condemned to forced labor (Bodde 1986, p. 69).

16. According to Lin (2003, pp. 65–66), the Qin Empire constructed four major roads in southern China: one from Chenzhou (Hunan) to Lianzhou (Guangdong), one from Dayuling (Jiangxi) to Nanxiong (Guangdong), one from Daozhou (Hunan) to Hexian (Jiangxi), and from Quanzhou (Hunan) to Jingjiang (Guangxi). It also constructed numerous highway systems centered in Xianyang, the Qin capital. Among these highways, a completely new one was constructed ending at Jiuyuan in the Ordos region. The road ran almost straight north, extending over 700 kilometers across numerous mountains. Parts of the road were so solidly built that nothing but grass could grow on them for over two thousand years after its completion. The First Emperor also ordered construction of several canals for military transport. The most important one was Lingqu, connecting the Yangzi and Zhujiang river systems, which guaranteed transportation of personnel and supplies during Qin’s invasion of the south.

17. The First Emperor relocated peoples of the conquered states at least nine times during his reign (Meng 2001, pp. 203–15). In the first year of the Qin unification, for instance, the First Emperor relocated over 120,000 “rich and powerful” families from all over China to the Qin capital region, in order to place them under surveillance (*Grand Historian*, “Biography of the First Emperor”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 239).

18. The First Emperor ordered the invasion of south China in 219 BCE. The first expedition (some 100,000 warriors) was badly defeated (Lin 2003, pp. 62–64). Not until the Lingqu Canal was completed and transportation greatly improved was the Qin army able to conquer the entire region.

19. The military campaign and the Great-Wall project were both led by Qin’s famous general Meng Tian (*Grand Historian*, “Biography of Meng Tian”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2565–66).

20. Lin (2003, pp. 149–51).

Construction of the vast mausoleum began in the early years of the First Emperor's reign. Some 700,000 "criminals" from all over China were corralled to work as laborers on the project.²¹ The *History of the Western Han* records that the hill-like tomb at the center of the mausoleum was 120 meters high, with a 2,167-meter circumference.²² In the twentieth century, after over two thousand years of erosion and other topographical changes, the tomb still stood seventy-six meters tall and had a circumference of 2,006 meters.²³ We do not know what, exactly, is inside the tomb because it has never been excavated, but its size alone is telling. Archaeologists examining the structures outside the tomb have now found that the center of the mausoleum was protected by a city wall about eight meters high with a 3,870-meter circumference. Outside the wall but still within the mausoleum were numerous buildings and other structures, including several palaces.²⁴ The entire mausoleum was 8.5 kilometers long and 7.5 kilometers wide, with a total area of sixty-four square kilometers.

A sign of the mausoleum's grandeur are numerous life-size terracotta soldiers, which were made to guard the tomb of the First Emperor. The currently unearthed part was only a very small portion of the entire terracotta army, which is estimated to contain four divisions or a total of 28,000 terracotta soldiers. Ray Huang described the terracotta army thusly:²⁵

[The] life-size earthenware soldiers equipped with real weapons, real chariots, and pottery horses are protecting the resting place of their master. The entire scene is marked by its grand scale on the one hand and its dedication to details on the other. The figures of the soldiers seem to have been copied from live models; no two of them are alike. Their facial expression shows [*sic*] endless individuality.²⁶ They all wear the same hair-style; yet in each case there is a slight variation in the way that the hair is combed, the whiskers are trimmed, and the braids are knotted. Their caps are decorated with patterned dots; their belts have metal hooks; their armor jackets are sculptured to indicate leather straps serving as fasteners; and their shoes have cleats on the soles. Their armor varies from that of the foot soldier to that of the cavalryman, notably with the omission of the shoulder piece of that worn by the mounted warrior to permit more

21. Most of these "criminals" were artisans of the conquered states and forced laborers.

22. *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of King Chuyuan"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 1954).

23. Wang and Luo (1962).

24. According to Lin (2003, p. 153), one of these palaces, as measured by archaeologists, was 62 meters long and 57 meters wide.

25. Huang (1997, pp. 37–38).

26. Huang's description exaggerates the individuality of the soldiers. It has been demonstrated that the terracotta warriors started as a limited repertoire of basic components, which were then combined in different ways to create differently posed warriors. Their individuality was conferred by the artisans who sculpted and incised their molded faces and body parts (Ledderose 2000).

freedom of movement when on horseback. The armor of the officers is more elaborate. The metal-work is refined, with even the smaller straps featuring decorative designs. The poses of the earthenware statues are diverse; they are standing at attention, kneeling down to man crossbows, driving chariots, poised for hand-to-hand combat, each at the battle station called for by the overall tactics. In sum, what is represented is an entire division of Qin infantry, flanked by a formation of chariots and a squadron of cavalry, ready to go into combat at a moment's notice.

It is estimated that five or six modern artists working with contemporary technology would need over two months to complete just one terracotta soldier.²⁷ We can thus imagine the amount of manpower invested in the entire terracotta army, not to mention the entire mausoleum. The Qin Empire was said to have conscripted over 15 percent of the entire Chinese population to work on various labor-intensive state projects.²⁸ A few years after the founding of the Qin dynasty, even women were drafted to work on state projects.²⁹ Throughout his reign, millions toiled in the service of the First Emperor's inordinate ambition. No regime of such callousness could survive for long.

A bloody succession struggle broke out as soon as the First Emperor died, during which some twenty princes and ten princesses, including Crown Prince Fusu, were killed or committed suicide. A year later, in 209 BCE, China's first major peasant rebellion, led by Chen Sheng and Wu Guang, broke out. Chen Sheng and Wu Guang were among nine hundred conscripts on their way to garrison Yuyang (north of present-day Beijing); they were delayed by heavy rains. According to Qin law, if the conscripts failed to arrive at the destination on time, they would be killed. Knowing the fate awaiting them, Chen and Wu killed the two escorting officers and started the uprising.³⁰

The rebellion immediately attracted tens of thousands of supporters and triggered multiple other rebellions, headed mostly by bandits or by the surviving elite of the overthrown warring states. Many must have been waiting for this moment, among them, Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Western Han dynasty.³¹ He had been hiding in the mountains when Chen and Wu launched their uprising, because many of the corvée laborers whom he was under orders

27. Bai, Gao, and An (1995, p. 230).

28. Lin (1981, p. 393).

29. Bai, Gao, and An (1995, p. 230).

30. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Chen She"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 1952).

31. In 8 CE, the Western Han dynasty was usurped by Wang Mang, who established his short-lived Xin dynasty. In the ensuing rebellions, the military forces controlled by Liu Xiu, an imperial clansman of the Western Han, reunified China and in 25 CE established the Eastern Han dynasty, with the posthumous imperial title of Emperor Guangwu. Since the Eastern Han resembled the Western Han (especially its later part) in a number of important ways, historians often discuss the two as one Han dynasty. When discussing the structural features shared by both dynasties, this book calls both "the Han dynasty."

to escort to a designated place had escaped on the way. Rather than be executed for dereliction of duty, he freed all the remaining corvée laborers and went into hiding.³² Besides Liu Bang, other rebel leaders such as Xiang Liang, Ying Bu, Peng Yue, Zhang Er, Chen Yu, and Zhang Liang were in hiding or had become bandits in the mountains when Chen and Wu rebelled.³³ Widespread banditry allowed the anti-Qin rebellions to spread like wildfire. Although Chen Sheng and Wu Guang were both killed by the Qin army, the rebel forces grew stronger and more coordinated and in 206 BCE occupied the Qin capital. The contest was now between two major anti-Qin forces, one led by Liu Bang and the other by Xiang Yu. After five years of clashes and skirmishes Xiang Yu's army was totally defeated, Xiang committed suicide, and Liu Bang became founding emperor of the Western Han dynasty.

THE EARLY WESTERN HAN TRANSITION

The newly founded Western Han dynasty shared numerous similarities with its short-lived predecessor³⁴ but was different in two important ways. The consequences of these, both intended and unintended, were not only crucial to early Western Han politics but also exerted a huge impact on the rest of Han dynasty history. Both differences deserve attention.

First, the Qin dynasty ruled its entire empire through a centralized bureaucracy, whereas the early Western Han governed through a combination of bureaucratic and "feudal" administrations. The "feudal" administrations refer to the seven autonomous kingdoms established and headed by Liu Bang's allies in his fight for the empire. Since these kingdoms together occupied more than half of the empire's territory, and their rulers enjoyed great military, legal, and administrative autonomy, this political arrangement lent tremendous instability to early Western Han politics.

Chinese historians have wondered why Liu adopted the system in the first place. He was compelled to adopt this feudal arrangement by historical circumstances. Long before the Qin conquest, the Qin state was ruled by an effective bureaucracy headed by a single ruler firmly in control of military and civilian

32. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Liu Bang"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 347).

33. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Xiang Yu"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 295–340; "Biography of Peng Yue," pp. 2589–96; "Biography of Ying Bu," pp. 2597–608); "Biography of Zhang Liang," pp. 2033–50; and "Biography of Zhang Er and Chen Yu," pp. 2571–88).

34. Most twentieth-century historians have emphasized the differences between the Qin and Han dynasties. Recent scholarship, however, sees much continuity between them, ranging from their coinage and road systems, court rituals and music, bureaucracy and ranks, and burial practices to building styles and arts (Nylan 2010). I have concluded that any two consecutive Chinese dynasties or regimes, including such apparently drastically different ones as Qin and Han or Republican and Communist China, must share many similarities. But the later regime always feels compelled to define itself as being different from its predecessor by developing a few crucial new features.

officials (chapter 7). Therefore, Since the First Emperor was sole ruler of Qin and its governing and military apparatuses, he had no need to share the rule of the conquered states after the conquest. But during the civil wars that culminated in the formation of the Western Han dynasty, Liu Bang's army was only one of several major anti-Qin forces. In fact, for a long time, Liu's army was not even the strongest; it was only through successful military coalition-building that Liu was finally able to defeat his archenemy Xiang Yu and make himself emperor.³⁵ Although at the time of Xiang Yu's defeat, Liu Bang's army was by far the strongest, members of the coalition of which he was a part might well have turned on him, jostling for their own advantage. Under the circumstances, Liu Bang had no choice but to grant the entire eastern part of his territory as autonomous kingdoms to his seven major allies.

Second, the early Western Han elite was of one mind in believing that mighty Qin had collapsed largely because of its harsh rule.³⁶ Qin's punishing severity and the seven-year civil war of 209–202 BCE had caused serious depopulation.³⁷ Understandably, Legalism and draconian law were widely disfavored.³⁸ Not wanting to repeat Qin's mistakes and to stimulate economic recovery, the early Western Han rulers improvised a governing method inspired by Huang-Lao philosophy. Following Laozi, the Huang-Lao thinkers believed that the best way to rule a country was not to suppress the people with stringent laws or even by imposing Confucian norms, but to let people pursue their own wants and needs. Influenced by Huang-Lao philosophy, the early Western Han emperors lived frugally,³⁹ taxed agricultural products lightly, supported noninterventionist economic policies,⁴⁰ and enacted laws that intruded far less into their subjects'

35. Liu Bang's most critical allies were Han Xin, Peng Yue, and Ying Bu. They were all granted the title of king, but were later killed by Liu Bang.

36. One of the most influential essays written in that period is *New Writings* (Xinshu) attributed to Jia Yi (reproduced in Yan and Zhong 2000, pp. 1–24).

37. See *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of the Money Makers"; reproduced in Tang 1962, pp. 3679–96) and Lin (2003, p. 267) for the economic and demographic consequences of the civil wars.

38. As in Lu Jia's *New Discourses* ("Fuzheng 3"; reproduced in Wang 1986, p. 51): "The Qin dynasty treated law and punishment as if they were its nest, therefore the nest overturned; the Qin dynasty used Zhao Gao and Li Si as if they were its cane, therefore it fell down." (Zhao Gao was the First Emperor's most trusted eunuch.) Again, in *New Discourses*, Lu Jia ("Wuwei 4"; reproduced in Wang 1986, p. 62) observes: "Qin relied on Meng Tian to suppress external turmoil and Li Si to rule China by law, but the heavier the suppression, the more turmoil; the harsher the law, the more crimes committed; and the more troops Qin had, the more enemies it created. It was not that Qin rulers were careless of political stability, but they failed because their strategies were too brutal and their law too severe."

39. None of the early Western Han emperors and empresses was known for extravagance. *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Emperor Wen"; reproduced in Tang 1962, pp. 134–35) for example, relates in detail how Emperor Wen was frugal in the interests of the state. Loewe (1986, p. 129) suggests that such compliments could have "originated as a means of criticizing some of the later emperors for extravagant indulgence." Doubtless they served as backhanded reproaches, but the compliments were also genuinely deserved. For instance, the tombs of the early Western Han Emperors were small and quite simple, not remotely comparable to the extravagant mausoleum of the First Emperor. Not only was the tomb of Emperor Wen, in particular, small, but its predominant burial objects were made not of bronze but pottery (Du 1980).

40. After 205 BCE, the land tax was fixed most of the time at one-fifteenth of the yield. In 168 BCE, it was reduced by half to one-thirtieth of the yield. In 167 BCE, it was completely remitted for the next eleven years and was resumed at one-thirtieth of the yield in 156 BCE (Sadao 1986, pp. 596–97).

lives.⁴¹ In short, the early Western Han rulers more or less adhered to Laozi's prescription for ruling by acting as little as possible (*wu wei er zhi*; chapter 6).

The early Western Han ruling strategy had great success. By the time of Emperor Jing (r. 157–141 BCE), the empire's agricultural production had greatly improved, commercial activities had recovered, and the population in many regions had at least tripled.⁴² But giving the eastern part of the empire over to seven autonomous kingdoms soon led to problems. In 202 BCE, the year that the new Western Han dynasty was founded, Zang Tu (the king of Yan) rebelled. Although the rebellion was easily suppressed, other kingdoms subsequently also either rebelled or were maneuvered into rebellion. Throughout his reign (202–195 BCE), Liu Bang had to spend much of his energy eliminating each of the seven autonomous kingdoms, one by one, by stratagem or force.⁴³ China's traditional historiography tends to attribute Liu Bang's problems with the seven autonomous kingdoms to the imperial ambitions of their kings. The problems were more nuanced than that. The rulers of the seven kingdoms were all ambitious warlords who had acquired significant amount of power during the anti-Qin rebellion. Some of them entertained the same imperial ambition as Liu Bang and might easily have outflanked Liu Bang to found a new dynasty. As long as the autonomous kings possessed powerful armies, Liu Bang could not but see them as potential threats, regardless of their private intentions. At the same time, the kings knew that, regardless of their intentions or actions, Liu Bang would likely seek to destroy them as long as they controlled territory and troops. The mistrust was as mutual as it was inevitable.

Yet, even after eliminating the autonomous kingdoms, Liu Bang conferred royal titles on his sons and brothers, establishing nine appanages (also known as princely kingdoms).⁴⁴ He also exacted an oath from his ministers: "If anyone outside the Liu family later titles himself a king, all of you should annihilate the usurper."⁴⁵ Without knowing more about the historical context, it is hard to understand why Liu would again decentralize his empire. He should at least have known, from long-established conventional wisdom, that such family-tie-based political arrangements would in the long run undermine the imperial house.

41. Xiao He, followed by Cao Shen, were the first two Western Han chancellors, and both promoted Huang-Lao ruling methods. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Cao"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2029) records that to promote the Huang-Lao ruling method, Cao Shen's criteria for all his subordinates was that they be kind, generous, and even slow, and he fired many people simply because they were too smart, active, and ambitious.

42. For example, it is recorded that at the beginning of the Western Han dynasty, a duke usually controlled only about 10,000 commoner households, yet by the time of emperors Wen and Jing the ducal domain had increased to 30,000–40,000 households (*History of the Western Han*, "Preface of Gaohui Gaohou Wen Gongchenbiao"; reproduced in Tang 1962, pp. 527–28).

43. When Ying Bu, the King of Huainan, rebelled in 196 BCE, Liu Bang was already quite ill. Yet Liu personally led the army that defeated Ying Bu. Liu died soon after the war (*History of the Western Han*, "Biography of Liu Bang"; reproduced in Tang 1962, pp. 73–80).

44. Lin (2003, pp. 262–63).

45. *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Wang Ling"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 2047).

Liu Bang might have had two main reasons to establish those nine appanages. First, in the beginning of the Western Han dynasty, rule over all of China through a centralized bureaucracy was still a new model, whose advantages were not yet fully realized. Furthermore, early Western Han thinkers speculated that another reason for the Qin dynasty's rapid disintegration was precisely the First Emperor's refusal to create princely kingdoms, so that when rebellions broke out after his death there was nowhere for the Qin rulers to turn for help. In other words, some people at the time saw strategic advantages in a feudal arrangement. The second, and perhaps more important, reason is that Liu Bang might have established the nine appanages in order to prevent his wife, Empress Lü (d. 180 BCE), and her relatives from seizing control of the empire after his death. Empress Lü had played an important role in the wars that led to the establishment of the Western Han dynasty, and was highly influential in court politics while Liu Bang was alive. Immediately after Liu's death Empress Lü became China's de facto ruler for fifteen years, during which time she killed several members of Liu Bang's family whom she perceived as threats and granted royal titles and territory to her four nephews.⁴⁶ But the oath between Liu Bang and his ministers delegitimized Empress Lü's actions and provoked widespread resentment of her actions.⁴⁷ The rulers of several of the appanages rose against the Lü family. After the death of Empress Lü, the king of Qi staged an uprising against the Lü clan.⁴⁸ This provided an opportunity for some high officials in the capital to organize a successful palace intrigue, during which the four nephews of Empress Lü and their families were slaughtered.⁴⁹ One of Liu Bang's sons was restored to the throne as Emperor Wen (r. 180–157 BCE).

Soon after demise of the Lü clan, a few princely kingdoms became so powerful that their rulers grew assertive, making the emperors of the early Western Han court increasingly nervous. Western Han's family-based feudal arrangement soon faced a crisis. Readers may wonder why Western Zhou's family-based feudalism lasted for hundreds of years but its Western Han counterpart could not. The answer lies in the historical memory left by the prolonged Eastern Zhou feudal crisis (chapter 5). The stories in *Zuo's Commentary*, for example, were all well known to the early Western Han rulers and their officials. *Zuo's Commentary* starts with a famous account of Duke Zhuang of Zheng suppressing a rebellion staged by his younger brother Gongshu Duan, whose feudal domain had grown extremely powerful.⁵⁰ Stories of ambitious local aristocrats who posed dangers for the central government fill the *Commentary*. Beginning in the Age of Hegemons it gradually

46. *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Empress Lü"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 3933).

47. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Empress Lü"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 400).

48. *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Five Kings"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 1994).

49. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Empress Lü"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 407–10).

50. *Zuo's Commentary* (Yin 1, 722 BCE; reproduced in Yang 1990, pp. 10–14).

became conventional wisdom that the feudal arrangement would weaken the state's central authority. Historical memory combined with conventional political wisdom made it impossible for the Western Han court and the appanage rulers to establish mutual trust and accelerated the pace of the early Western Han "feudal crisis" in a way that was reminiscent of the feudal crisis of the Eastern Zhou period.

Conflict between the central authority and the appanages created a serious problem for both Emperor Wen and his son, Emperor Jin. In 177 and 176 BCE, the kings of two appanages (Jibei and Huainan) rebelled. Both rebellions occurred in the aftermath of the succession struggles that ended the Lü family's rule and enthroned Emperor Wen, but vivid memories of the Eastern Zhou feudal crisis led some officials to read the rebellions as a sign of a general feudal crisis. Immediately after the rebellions, Jia Yi submitted a famous memorial to Emperor Wen pointing out that the two rebellions were not coincidental, and that as long as the princely kingdoms remained militarily powerful, such rebellions were inevitable. Jia then suggested that Emperor Wen divide the big appanages into smaller and hence weaker ones.⁵¹ When, during the reign of Emperor Jing (157–141 BCE), some of the appanages once more seemed threatening, Imperial Councilor Chao Cuo (d. 154 BCE) presented a memorial maintaining that appanage kings would rebel regardless of how the central authority treated them. If the emperor were to take immediate measures to limit their power, the appanages would of course rebel, but the military power of the imperial court was sufficient to suppress them. If the appanages were not cut down to size at once, he warned, their strength would increase and the imperial court would then face a much greater danger. Chao Cuo recommended an immediate trimming down of the appanage territories and their armies.⁵² Emperor Jing took this advice, and, as Chao Cuo had predicted, rebellions followed. In 154 BCE the king of Wu, led a rebellion with the armies of the seven appanages, under the battle cry "Kill Chao Cuo and rid Emperor Jing of bad advisers." Emperor Jing's troops defeated the rebels after a three-month campaign, but the emperor was forced to execute Chao Cuo to appease the rebels. Having suppressed the rebellion, Emperor Jing rode the momentum of victory and took steps to curtail the appanages. He first divided each large appanage into several smaller ones and then, in 145 BCE, decreed that all appanage officials would be appointed by the imperial court and that the kings could not interfere with these court-appointed local administrators.⁵³ The appanage rulers were now mere aristocrats, which cleared

51. Jia Yi's *Zhǐ'āncè* (chén zhèngshì shù) is collected in *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Jia Yi"; reproduced in Tang 1962, pp. 2221–66). Not long after the rebellions of the two appanages were suppressed, Emperor Wen divided the kingdom of Qi into six smaller kingdoms and the kingdom of Huainan into three, and granted them to close family members.

52. *History of the Western Han* ("History of Jin-Yan-Wu Appanages"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 1906).

53. See *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Emperor Jing"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 143) for the partition of large appanages by Emperor Jing, and Lin (2003, p. 283) for the decree of 145 BCE.

the slate for Emperor Wu to further expand the bureaucratic mode of governance to most parts of the imperial domain.

THE RISE OF THE CONFUCIAN-LEGALIST STATE

During the early Western Han dynasty, the Huang-Lao ruling strategy was generally successful. Notwithstanding wars at the borders or between the imperial state and the appanages, the reigns of emperors Wen and Jing have been characterized in Chinese history as an age of prosperity (*wen jing zhi zhi*). But prosperity begat new problems. First, peace and prosperity stimulated a rapid increase in population and the advent of two classes of the rich—wealthy merchants and landowners. Their capacity to monopolize the prices of agricultural products and their high-interest-rate loans, in conjunction with the increase in population, forced many peasants to sell or abandon their land. Huang-Lao nonintrusive rule, which had worked so far, was inadequate to the new conditions. Second, once the appanages were destroyed or reduced and bureaucratic administration firmly installed, the recruitment of civil officials became urgent. This was especially important for Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) because, as a strong and active emperor, he needed a bureaucracy that was not deeply intertwined with vested interests. Third, although the empire flourished under the Huang-Lao ruling methods, these methods did not constitute a legitimizing ideology or provide a moral basis for cooperation between the ruling house and the elite. The basis of state legitimacy (or the foundation of state power), an unremitting question in the minds of contemporaneous emperors, officials, and thinkers, now came to the fore after the Western Han dynasty's recent bout of political instability.⁵⁴ These tensions and the Western Han ruling elite's attempts to deal with them eventuated in imperial Confucianism as the ideology of rule and the selection of officials based on their mastery of the classics (particularly the Confucian classics) as a vehicle for a sustained state-elite alliance.⁵⁵

54. How to establish a more stable empire, or what the basis of state legitimacy should be, had been a central concern of the Han ruling elites ever since Liu Bang came to power. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Li Sheng and Lu Jia," reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang, 1959, pp. 2691–706) records that Lu Jia frequently cited the *Book of Odes* (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980) and other classics in his conversations with Liu Bang, and Liu Bang once retorted angrily, "I conquered the world on horseback. Those classics are useless to me." Lu Jia's riposte: "You can conquer the world on horseback, but you cannot rule it on horseback. King Tang of Shang and King Wu of Zhou both conquered the world by force but consolidated their rule by benevolence and moral guidance. A stable rule always combines military might with moral guidance. . . . If the Qin had learned from the early sage-kings and after conquering it had ruled the world by benevolence and moral guidance instead of by draconian laws, would your majesty be reigning here today?" According to the *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Li Sheng and Lu Jia"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2699), Liu Bang was abashed by Lu's reply and immediately asked Lu to elaborate. Lu Jia wrote twelve essays, collectively titled them *New Discourses* (*Xinyu*), and presented them to Liu Bang as memorials (Wang 1986).

55. The meaning of imperial Confucianism is explicated in the next section.

It was for good reasons that imperial Confucianism emerged as the state ideology. In Confucianism the relationships between the state and society are analogous to or an extension of patriarchal relations. Rulers were likely to prefer Confucianism over Daoism or Huang-Lao philosophy because Confucianism not only legitimized state rule, but also was hierarchical: it placed the state above the society. The elite segment of the population also found Confucianism an acceptable ideology: At the same time that Confucianism justified state power, it prescribed how such power should be exercised and thus lessened the possibility of despotic rule. Moreover, Confucianism defined a state-society relationship that placed Confucian scholars at the center of the political system, which opened the door into government for the elite population. Confucianism's intense emphasis on moral rule could hardly compete with Legalism in times when life-and-death military conflict required instrumental rationality unconstrained by Confucian principles. But the military conflict had largely become the past and the regime's stability depended increasingly on cooperation from the bureaucracy and other elite sections of society. That cooperation was forthcoming, because Confucianism had become an ideology that both the state and the elite (particularly the elite recruited into the bureaucracy) could accept.

The development of the Confucian-Legalist political system, however, was a slow and uneven process. It took a critical initial step during the reign of Emperor Wu, achieved dominance and a certain maturity in practice during the Eastern Han dynasty, and became fully developed only a millennium later, during the Song dynasty, with the rise of Neo-Confucianism. The next two sections of this chapter will first briefly analyze the metamorphosis of Chinese political thought before the advent of imperial Confucianism, and then discuss the early development of the Confucian-Legalist state under Emperor Wu. Not till chapter 12 do we arrive at the full articulation of the Confucian-Legalist political system during the Song dynasty.

The Making of a Prevailing Ideology

Although Confucian ideals always attracted some followers, as we have seen, their influence on politics was limited during the Age of Total War (chapter 6), the Qin dynasty, and the early years of the Western Han dynasty. We therefore need to understand the intellectual environment of those times, during which imperial Confucianism as a state ideology was only beginning to take shape.⁵⁶

As we saw in chapter 6, the major philosophies that emerged during the Eastern Zhou period were political philosophies, largely aimed at finding practical ways to achieve a good society. Members of the *shi* had some freedom to express their

56. Except where otherwise specified, the reconstruction of intellectual history in this section is based on the following monographs: Cheng (2004); Fung (1952); Ge (2001); Gong (2005a); Han (2005); Jin (1997); Ren (1990); Xu (1979); Q. Zhang (2003); Zhou (2000).

views, at times even to disregard the wishes and beliefs of their rulers. The passion of the thinkers of the time lay in persuading a ruler to follow a social program that was congruent with the political philosophy to which the thinker was committed.⁵⁷ Members of the *shi* were not in any sense, however, political actors with considerable autonomy, and a necessary pragmatism compelled them to take highly eclectic approaches. In later scholarship, almost all ancient China's thinkers have been canonized within a specific school, but in fact, they frequently invoked concepts and logics from other philosophical traditions to buttress their arguments. Attempts to locate ancient China's thinkers within particular schools of thought are doomed to distort what they actually thought and wrote.⁵⁸

The fundamental pragmatism of ancient Chinese philosophies facilitated eclectic thinking, but the eclectic works produced at that time were also shaped by the political context. During the Age of Total War, endless and ubiquitous warfare facilitated the dominance of Legalism in politics. Facing the reality, leaners of different traditions remodeled their views by incorporating Legalist elements. Many philosophical treatises of the time, such as *Guanzi* and the writings of Xunzi, were eclectic, with strong emphasis on Legalism.⁵⁹ During the early Western Han dynasty, when Legalism was out of favor and Huang-Lao was the dominant philosophy, the *Book of Master Huainan* (*Huainanzi*), an eclectic compilation in the Huang-Lao tradition, appeared.⁶⁰ The early Western Han scholar Sima Tan, father of Sima Qian, even argued that a synthesis of Chinese philosophies centered on the Huang-Lao worldview offered the best prescriptions for the relation of state and society.⁶¹

Scholars of a Confucian bent also became increasingly pragmatic during early the Western Han dynasty. Men like the stubbornly principled Mencius, who during the Age of Total War, went from state to state championing his version of a Confucian political program—in vain—became increasingly rare birds. It is recorded that when Shusun Tong became Liu Bang's political adviser, he arrived at court accompanied by over a hundred disciples.⁶² Yet, when Liu expressed his dislike of Shusun Tong's Confucian (*ru*) style of dress, the scholar immediately adopted a different style. Moreover, when Shusun Tong recommended a talented person to Liu Bang, he always recommended someone who had been a

57. Lloyd (1996).

58. Dong Zhongshu (ca. 196–107 BCE), for instance, was later regarded as a leading Western Han Confucian, but his works contain elements of Daoism, Legalism, yin-yang cosmology, and other traditions. Dong is even regarded as a Neo-Daoist by some modern scholars (Xiong 1984).

59. *Guanzi* (reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990). See chapter 6 for more discussion of Xunzi's works.

60. The *Book of Master Huainan* (reproduced in Liu 1989) was written under the patronage of Liu An (179–122 BCE), king of Huainan. The essays are presented as debates, between Liu and his court guests, on a wide range of topics, including mythology, history, astronomy, politics, geography, and the sciences. See Queen (2003); Roth (1992); and Vankeerberghen (2001) for discussions on the nature of the text. In particular, Vankeerberghen provides an excellent analysis of the intellectual and political milieu in which the book was created.

61. *Grand Historian* ("Sima Qian's Preface"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 3292).

62. *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Liu Jing and Shusun Tong"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2721).

bandit or had demonstrated great courage in fighting. To his followers' dismay at such obsequiousness, Shusun Tong replied that Liu Bang "is now fighting to conquer the world. Are any of you good at this?" Only after the Western Han dynasty was firmly established did Shusun Tong begin to urge Liu Bang to adopt a Confucian mode of rule.⁶³ Shusun Tong was not alone in his cautious eclecticism. Confucian-minded scholar-officials of the early Western Han dynasty wrote famous memorials—such as Lu Jia's *New Discourses*,⁶⁴ Jia Yi's *Strategies for Political Stability* (*zhi'ance*)—that mingled elements identified by later scholars as Confucian, Daoist, or Legalist.⁶⁵ Of these early Western Han thinkers, it was Dong Zhongshu whose highly influential synthesis of Daoist worldviews, yin-yang cosmology, and Legalist statecraft was openly centered on Confucian values.⁶⁶ Dong, however, remained a relatively unimportant figure in his own time, never attaining a senior position in central government. Nor do his writings define Western Han Confucianism.⁶⁷ Only between the end of the Western Han and the early Eastern Han dynasties did Dong's writings gain wide influence among intellectuals as well as politicians.⁶⁸ It is Dong's historical impact that defined him as the most significant Western Han Confucian.⁶⁹

Here is a simplified description of three sets of ideas that form the core of Dong Zhongshu's theory.⁷⁰ First, influenced by the warring-states cosmologists, Dong affirmed that humans are an integral part of nature (or heaven). Heaven and its

63. For example, *Grand Historian* ("Biographies of Liu Jing and Shusun Tong"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2721) relates that when Liu Bang became emperor, he disliked Confucian rituals. At court, his officials (men who had been comrades in his fight for the throne) drank, argued, and bragged about his personal contributions to the new regime. When drunk, they shouted and yelled and stabbed at the pillars with their swords. The appalled Shusun Tong said to Liu Bang, "Confucian scholars were not that useful when you were at war, but they are very useful for the maintenance of the empire. I beseech your majesty to allow me to summon the Confucians in Lu, and these, together with my own disciples, would be able to design a courtly ritual for you." Liu Bang assented, and Shusun Tong and his associates then designed rituals appropriate to a court, spent months training the officials in ritual behavior, and displayed the successful fruits of their labors in a ceremony inaugurating the completion of the Changle Palace. Shusun Tong was subsequently promoted to the position Superintendent of Ceremonial (*tai chang*).

64. *New Discourses* (reproduced in Wang 1986).

65. See Cheng (2004, chaps. 2–3); Gong (2005a, pp. 117–51); Han (2005, pp. 114–39); Zhou (2000, chap. 3).

66. Modern scholars generally consider that compilations, such as *Guanzi* (reproduced in Xie and Zhu 1990), *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* (reproduced in Zhang 2007), or *Book of Master Huainan* (reproduced in Liu 1989), no matter how vast in scope, are less coherent than works by single authors, such as Xunzi or Dong Zhongshu.

67. Cheng (1998/1999, p. 356).

68. Dong Zhongshu is only occasionally mentioned in Sima Qian's *Grand Historian*, but *History of Western Han* contains an extensive Dong biography, with a hugely inflated account of Dong's role in the court of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) and in the creation and canonization of imperial Confucianism.

69. For an example of Dong's historical impact: *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (*Baihu Tongji*), the most important Eastern Han Confucian synthesis, compiled by Ban Gu and the other officials who had participated in the White Tiger Hall debates sanctioned by Emperor Zhang (r. 76–88 CE), was in many ways modeled on Dong Zhongshu's synthesis.

70. See Queen (1996) for an analysis on the life and works of Dong Zhongshu, and Cheng (1998/1999) for an excellent critique of Queen's book. The authenticity of *Luxuriant Dew on Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu fanlu*), and Dong Zhongshu's authorship of it have been debated ever since the Song dynasty. I agree with the assessment that, incomplete as they are, most parts of the book are authentic (Davidson and Loewe 1993, p. 82).

regularities (such as the four seasons) are the ultimate origin of the Way (*dao*), or, more narrowly, of the proper social order and the correct conduct of individuals. Heaven can express displeasure through unusual weather patterns or natural disasters. Heaven grants mandates only to good rulers (*tian ren gan ying*).⁷¹ Second, Dong believed that the social order was regulated by three cardinal relationships: the ruler directs ministers; the father directs the son; and the husband directs the wife. To prevent these relationships from becoming wholly autarchic, he asserted that they could not be sustained without limitations on the dominant figure. The ruler, Dong affirmed, must radiate authority before his subjects but have humility before heaven,⁷² and to maintain that authority must be a moral exemplar to his subjects.⁷³ Third, Dong asserted that a ruler's most important duties were to promote moral behavior by supporting Confucian education and to maintain social order by establishing and maintaining just laws. The essence of Confucian education is to instill perfect virtue and decorum, and it is more effective, and certainly more benign, than law and punishment.⁷⁴ Law and punishment must be exercised in ways that reinforce the Confucian social order centered on the three cardinal principles.⁷⁵

By incorporating cosmological thinking, Dong brought the Western Zhou Mandate of Heaven concept (see chapter 2) back to center stage. Moreover, whereas Dong believed that heaven evolves according to its own laws (revealing the impress of Daoism on his thinking), he also stressed that human nature (*xing*) is not entirely formed by heaven but also by education and cultivation (revealing the Confucian essence of his thinking). Finally, in contrast to the idealism of Mencius, whose five cardinal virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity) operate reciprocally in all social relationships,⁷⁶ Dong's three cardinal principles embody dominance: ruler over minister, father over son, husband over wife.

Dong's asymmetrical, hierarchical society, his elevation of the ruler over all, and his belief in the utility of law and punishment made his version of Confucianism

71. *Luxuriant Dew on Spring and Autumn* (reproduced in Su 1992, pp. 340–42).

72. "Qumin er shenjun, qujun er shentian" in *Luxuriant Dew on Spring and Autumn* (reproduced in Su 1992, p. 32).

73. By the same token, ministers must exert great authority over (and also be good exemplars to) their subordinates; fathers must exert great authority over (and be good exemplars to) their sons; and husbands must exert great authority over (and be good exemplars to) their wives.

74. "Jiao, zheng zhi ben ye; yu, zheng zhi mo ye," in *Luxuriant Dew on Spring and Autumn* (reproduced in Su 1992, p. 94).

75. In imperial China the setting of disputes and punishment of crimes were not based only on the nature of the dispute or crime but also on the social position and intentions of the parties involved. The same crime would be more severely punished if committed by a servant, a woman, a youth, or any individual who was low in the Confucian hierarchy. An act of revenge against a person who had harmed one's parents was also likely to receive a lighter sentence than one against a person who had stolen one's ox. Different dynasties established different legal codes, but throughout dynastic China, law was seen as a means of reinforcing the Confucian moral order (Chü 1961; Shiga 1998).

76. Bloom (1998); Tu (1979); Wei (1977).

appealing to rulers. His emphasis on the ultimate authority of heaven and on the morality of the ruler and his officials as being crucial to maintaining social order constituted a check on imperial and state power. It also served as a basis of cooperation between the ruler and the elite population. Perhaps his awareness of the need for balance is what later elevated Dong Zhongshu in the estimation of scholars as a pivotal synthesizer of the Confucianism tradition.

A reminder: Confucianism as formulated during the Han dynasty was not the same as the various “Confucian” ideas that emerged during the Eastern Zhou era. Han Confucianism was a stage in the development of a synthesized ideology containing “Confucianized” elements from many other schools of thought in ancient China. That synthesized ideology was “imperial Confucianism.”

Essential Features of Imperial Confucianism

Confucianism called for hierarchical social relations and patriarchal familial relations.⁷⁷ It was an attractive ideology to rulers because it legitimized state power by equating the head of the state with the head of the family and justified the dominance of the state over the society. It was also acceptable to elites for three reasons: (1) Confucianism not only emphasized the dominance of the head of state over his officials and subjects, but also the dominance of officials, who were of the elite, over their subordinates and over commoners. (2) While emphasizing the dominion of the state, Confucianism also emphasized that it is the ruler’s virtue that sustains his rule, and it authorized Confucian scholar-officials to indoctrinate rulers with Confucianism from childhood on and to criticize immoral rulers. (3) Once Confucianism was transformed into a state ideology, Confucian learning and moral conduct became increasingly important in the selection of officials. Some Western scholars have compared the Confucianized bureaucracy to the Catholic clergy of the Christian Middle Ages. This is an overstatement. On the other hand, the Confucianized bureaucracy did become a significant institution through which the state might absorb social elites into the government, an organizational base for the perpetuation and dominance of Confucianism in society, and an institution that might limit the actions of an overreaching emperor.

In addition, Confucianism satisfied much of the religious need of the Chinese and performed many social functions, as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, or Buddhism do in other societies. This it accomplished through the rituals of ancestor worship and its emphasis on the human capacity to cultivate and achieve union with the ways of Heaven.⁷⁸ Once a persuasion such as Confucianism

77. Summarized here is a set of slowly crystallizing structures that only reached maturity during or after the Song dynasty, more than a millennium later. Nevertheless, the macrostructures outlined here shaped not only the history of the Han dynasty but also the contour of Chinese history over the next two millennia.

78. Hall and Ames (1987); Taylor (1985, 1990).

(or Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, or Buddhism) reaches a certain level of influence in a society, it establishes a relationship to the state. Different persuasions, however, will have different relationships with the state due to their distinct natures. Of the major persuasions, Confucianism was the only one that was tailor-made for the support of the state. The nature of Confucianism facilitated a symbiosis between the political actors and the ideological actors. And after wars ceased to be a major engine of Chinese history, it was this relationship that made China's political system particularly resilient in the face of social changes. It was also this relationship that gave rise to China's major historical patterns.

Emperor Wu's New Initiatives

As soon as Emperor Wu ascended to the throne in 141 BCE, he called on high-level officials to recommend to the central government individuals who were "capable and good" (*xian liang*),⁷⁹ "sincere and upright" (*fang zheng*), and "frank and able to admonish unflinchingly" (*zhi yan ji jian*).⁸⁰ He also appointed Dou Ying and Tian Fen, his senior relatives by marriage, to the positions of chancellor and supreme commander, respectively, their duties being to promote his new policies. Emperor Wu's new initiatives represented an abrupt shift of policy from the previous reigns. Therefore, they met with great resistance, especially from Empress Dowager Dou (Emperor Wu's grandmother), who was a staunch supporter of the Huang-Lao way of rulership.⁸¹ Only after the death of Empress Dowager Dou in 135 BCE was Emperor Wu able to promote his new policies unhindered.

Among Emperor Wu's new initiatives, his decision to promote Confucianism to the level of state ideology had the longest-lasting historical consequence. But what was the Confucianism of his time? First, the reign of Emperor Wu was not so distant from the eclectic intellectual environment of the Warring States period, and most *shi* of the time were intellectual heirs of the pluralism and eclecticism of that time. Second, throughout the Western Han, imperial Confucianism was still in a formative stage. Dong Zhongshu's synthesis, itself the offspring of an eclectic intellectual environment, was not yet widely accepted as a dominant canon. What Confucianism entailed was still a highly contested matter.⁸² Even the word *ru*,

79. The officials called on included the chancellor, the imperial counselor, the dukes of princely kingdoms, two thousand fully ranked *shi* and two thousand *shi* officials, chancellors of the princely kingdoms, and imperial relatives.

80. *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Emperor Wu"; reproduced in Tang 1962, pp. 155–56).

81. Empress Dowager Dou forced Emperor Wu to dismiss Dou Ying (even though he was her nephew) and Tian Fen and to jail two other Confucian-minded officials (Bai, Gao, and An 1995, p. 314).

82. When Confucianism was sanctioned as a state ideology, Emperor Wu appointed experts in the following five classics as Erudites (*boshi*): *Book of Changes*, *Book of Odes* (with the exegeses of the Qi, Lu, and Han schools), *Book of Documents*, *Book of Rites*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals* with the *Gongyang Commentary*. Once these books were sanctioned as official learning, enormous privileges accrued to those who could claim expertise in them. Therefore fierce debates erupted over the authentic versions of these classics as well as their relationship to Confucianism (Liu 2006, pp. 40–41). The most significant such debate was between the Old Text and New Text schools. All the Confucian classics that were available during the Western Han dynasty were written in the new Western Han script, which

which is inadequately translated as “Confucianism,” still carried several meanings and identities.⁸³ Third, the organizations and institutions that supported the dominance of Confucianism were in their formative stages during the Western Han dynasty; in fact, they were not fully developed until the Song dynasty more than a millennium later (chapter 12). Finally, although over the course of Chinese dynastic history Confucianism proved to be an ideal ideology for legitimizing state power, during the reign of Emperor Wu, and indeed the entire Han dynasty, such a consensus had not yet been obtained, even among the rulers. Many emperors, such as Emperor Xuan (r. 73–49 BCE) and most of the Eastern Han emperors after Emperor Shun (r. 125–144 CE), tried to distance themselves from Confucian teachings and recovered other philosophical elements to guide their rule.⁸⁴ Even Emperor Wu, who tried hard to promote Confucianism, used it mainly to buttress the legitimacy of the empire, not to guide all state policies. To wipe out other schools of thought so that Confucianism might dominate beyond the realm of politics was certainly not his intention.⁸⁵ Moreover, no Han emperor, regardless of personality, was accustomed to tolerating moral and ritual constraint imposed by the bureaucracy, which was itself still in the early stages of Confucianization. Yet despite all these caveats, it remains indisputable that the influence of Confucianism was on the rise, albeit in a fluctuating manner, during and after the reign of Emperor Wu, and that the political model that emerged during his reign would shape Chinese history.

Emperor Wu may have embraced Confucianism to buttress his authority, but he was a statesman with acute sense of reality. To achieve his goals, he recruited men of different backgrounds and intellectual orientations into his court.⁸⁶ He also relied on Legalist ruling methods much more than had his Han predecessors. During the fifty-plus years of his reign, Emperor Wu waged protracted wars

differed visibly from pre-Han writing. But as Confucianism became increasingly important, more Confucian classics were rediscovered (the biggest number were some books discovered in the wall of a house belonging to Confucius's descendants), and some pseudo-classics were forged. Since these rediscovered and fake classics were all written in the pre-Han script, those who believed that they represented more genuine expressions of Confucianism were labeled as the Old Text school. Correspondingly, those who insisted that only the classics written in the Western Han script represented authentic Confucianism formed the New Text school. The differences between the Old and New Text schools are numerous, and have been nicely summarized by scholars such as Liao (1911); Nylan (1994); Sun (2002); and Zhu (1983). During the Western Han period, the New Text school acquired greater credibility. Thanks to the efforts of Liu Xin (ca. 53 BCE–23 CE) and his followers during the Eastern Han period, the Old Text school displaced the New.

83. Nylan (1999, p. 19). The highly eclectic nature of Han dynasty Confucianism had been noted in early studies as well (Shryock 1932, p. 43).

84. Nylan (1999, p. 21).

85. Nylan (1999, pp. 20–22).

86. Many officials promoted by Emperor Wu to prominent positions early in his reign were not identified by later scholars as Confucians. For example, Sang Hongyang was the son of a merchant and an expert in taxation and budgeting. Wei Qing was born as a slave but rose in ranks to the position of commander in chief. In addition, Ji An and Zheng Dangshi were regarded as Daoists; Zhang Tang was primarily a Legalist; Yan Zhu and Zhufu Yan were known as Strategists; and Mei Cheng and Sima Xiangru were famous poets and writers. See Vankeerberghen (2001, chap. 1) for a discussion of the philosophical orientations of some of the most prominent officials during the early part of Emperor Wu's reign.

against the Xiongnu nomads in the north and greatly expanded the empire's territory in the south.⁸⁷ He implemented bureaucratic reforms to strengthen state authority and allowed that authority to penetrate deeper into society.⁸⁸ He revived many Qin legal codes and developed some of his own.⁸⁹ He stripped away more political power from the princely kings and dukes, until their rental properties were their only source of income.⁹⁰ He forced rich and powerful lineages throughout China to relocate, his purpose being to uproot them from their power bases and place them under tighter control.⁹¹ He introduced universal coinage and placed many crucial economic sectors, especially iron and salt production, under the state control.⁹² Emperor Wu established a centralized bureaucratic system similar to that of the Qin dynasty, with one crucial difference—whereas the First Emperor had based his authority on sheer force, Emperor Wu based the legitimacy of Western Han rule on Confucianism, and the power of the dynasty on a political alliance with a state bureaucracy that was in the process of Confucianization. As a result, while the Qin lasted barely two decades, the Western Han dynasty lasted over two centuries. And the political model that took its initial form during the Han dynasty endured with modifications until the Republican Revolution in 1911.

INTEGRATION OF POLITICAL POWER AND IDEOLOGY

The advance of Confucianism during the reign of Emperor Wu may be understood in a number of ways. In the theoretical perspective of this book, however, it can be interpreted as an initial step in a gradually developing symbiotic relationship between political and ideological actors. As was argued in chapter 1, no ideology can maintain its significance without being sustained by powerful organizations and institutions. Before Confucianism deeply penetrated ordinary people's daily lives, which began to occur during the Song dynasty, the institution

87. Xiongnu tribal federations had posed a major threat to the Han dynasty ever since it was established (*Grand Historian*, "History of Xiongnu"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2879–920). Before Emperor Wu, however, the Han empire's major policy toward the Xiongnu was appeasement—namely, to deliver large amounts of goods to Xiongnu regularly as "gifts" and, occasionally, to send a princess to marry the Shanyu, the head of the Xiongnu empire (Di Cosmo 2001; Yü 1967, 1986).

88. Bielenstein (1980); Qian (Ch'ien Mu, 1982); de Crespigny (1981); Loewe (2006); Wang (2006).

89. Most of the legal documents of his reign were prepared by Zhang Tang and Zhao Yu (*History of the Western Han*, "Biographies of Cruel Officials"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 51). More legal statutes were enacted during the reign of Emperor Wu than were enacted during all of the preceding reigns (S. Yang 2001, p. 54). The Western Han rulers assembled 13,472 accounts of criminal trials and sentences as models to be followed (*History of the Western Han*, "Record of Penal Law"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 1101). During the reign of Emperor Wu, officials also started to use some Confucian classics to guide criminal trials, basing their judgments on the extent to which the crime had violated Confucian moral principles (Zhang 1982).

90. The most important new policy was to encourage a princely king to divide his domain among his sons, thus diminishing each princely kingdom, with the result that it could no longer be a base from which to challenge the central authority (*History of the Western Han*, "Biography of Zhufu Yan"; reproduced by in Tang 1962, p. 2802).

91. Lin (2003, pp. 340–45). Emperor Wu also broke down many of the "disobedient" large clans in order to expand the scope of state power (S. Yang 2001, pp. 166–71).

92. Wu (1981); S. Yang (2001, pp. 98–125).

and practices that supported and extended the impact of Confucianism were the Confucianized bureaucracy and the methods of selecting officials. Since the Confucianized bureaucracy was simultaneously a central part of the state apparatus and the embodiment and emissary of Confucian ideology, let us now examine the Han bureaucracy as it gradually took shape during and after Emperor Wu's reign. In particular, we need to understand the relationship between the emperors and the bureaucracy during the Han dynasty and beyond, the structure of the Han bureaucracy, how its methods of selecting and promoting officials perpetuated its Legalist aspect and led to problems, and how methods of selecting officials fostered the Confucianization of the bureaucracy and extended the impact of Confucianism into the larger society.

The Symbiosis of the Emperor and the Confucianized Bureaucracy

Etienne Balazs, an eminent scholar who held a rather negative view of the Chinese political system, summarized the nature of the relationship between the Chinese emperor and the bureaucracy this way⁹³:

The first thing that strikes one about [the Chinese bureaucracy] is the precarious position of its members individually, contrasted with their continuous existence as a social class. Even the highest officials were, as individuals, at the mercy of the absolute and despotic state, and were liable to disappear suddenly from view. Any one of them might be minister one day, and consigned to a dungeon the next; yet within the same state that had condemned him as an individual, the body of officials as a whole continued, undisturbed, to play its part.⁹⁴

Balazs' statement oversimplifies the relationship, but it does capture the great tension between the bureaucracy and the emperor and describes the worst-case scenario when the tension became intolerable. In imperial China the emperor was legitimized as the Son of Heaven, holder of the Heavenly Mandate. He was the symbol of unity and the ultimate source of bureaucratic authority. The bureaucracy could not function without the legitimacy afforded it by the emperor. On the other hand, when we compare the emperors of the Western Han or the later Chinese dynasties with the Roman emperors, it becomes clear that the Chinese emperors were much more passive. A Roman emperor was above all a military leader; he was also expected to play an active role in ruling the state. By contrast, the prestige of a Chinese emperor did not derive from heroism,⁹⁵ most policy initiatives in China came from below, and the real political and administrative

93. The general pattern discussed here was not limited to the Han dynasty. It fits the later Chinese dynasties even better.

94. Balazs (1964, p. 6).

95. Loewe (2006, p. 10).

power of the government resided in the bureaucracy.⁹⁶ When this structure worked well, it looked somewhat like the modern constitutional monarchy.⁹⁷ The politics of this structure, however, was very different from that of a Western-style constitutional monarchy: although an emperor was never able to challenge the bureaucracy as a whole, as Balazs has insightfully commented, the life of an official could be jeopardized if he lost the trust of the emperor.

To strengthen his personal power without directly challenging the whole bureaucracy, the Chinese emperor was able to employ two mechanisms that Finer labels as the “Law of Proximity” and “Law of Inflated Titles.”⁹⁸ The law of proximity holds that “the more decisive the personal will of the ruler in the polity, the more influential are those who have the closest and the most continuous access to him.” This mechanism applies particularly well to Emperor Wu. To free himself from the constraints of the bureaucratic apparatus, he greatly expanded the power of his personal secretaries (Masters of Writing), relied on the people close to him, and created what was dubbed the Inner Court.⁹⁹ Since the relatives of emperor’s wives and the palace eunuchs enjoyed great proximity to the emperor, under an assertive emperor, the Law of Proximity lent these people power.¹⁰⁰ But the process also set in motion another dynamic, the “Law

96. Qian (Ch’ien Mu 1982, p. 3); Finer (1997, p. 482); Loewe (2006, pp. 10–16). Founding emperors of new dynasties, however, tended to be more active rulers. And very occasionally, some mid-dynasty emperors also emerged as active rulers. Emperor Wu was one of them.

97. This was pretty much the case in Western Han before Emperor Wu’s reign. A famous purported dialogue between Emperor Wen and Chancellor Chen Ping illustrates the point (*History of the Western Han*, “Biography of Chen Ping”; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 2049). It started with Emperor Wen consulting his chancellor of the right, Zhou Bo, on the state’s legal and financial matters. Zhou, unable to answer, felt greatly embarrassed. The emperor then asked his chancellor of the left, Chen Ping, the same question. Chen replied: “Officials have different responsibilities.” The emperor asked further: “What do you mean by that?” Chen then added: “If you want to know about legal matters, you should ask the Superintendent of Trials (*tingwei*). If you want to inquire about matters related to money and grain, the best person to ask is the Superintendent of Agriculture.” The emperor then questioned: “If each matter is the responsibility of a particular person, what is left for an emperor to do?” Chen explained: “Your majesty’s task is to lead me. Your majesty appointed me as Chancellor, and I am helping your majesty to lead the country. In Heaven, I harmonize yin and yang and the order of the four seasons. On earth, I make sure everything occur as it should. Outside [the empire], I keep in check all the barbarians and princely lords. Within [the empire], I love and try to be close to the people, and to make sure that all the ministers work well at their posts.” This dialogue reveals not only a general pattern of relationship between the emperor and the bureaucracy before the reign of Emperor Wu, but also a Huang-Lao political ideal, according to which the emperor served as a ritual head rather than as an active ruler of the country (Lao 2006, p. 5).

98. Finer (1997, p. 490).

99. During the reign of Emperor Wu, the office of his personal secretaries (Masters of Writing) was expanded into a big bureau headed by four masters who had the power to intervene in all kinds of government activities. During the Eastern Han period, the office of the Master of Writing further expanded (S. Yang 2001, p. 147).

100. During the Western Han dynasty, an emperor was served by Six Masters (*liu shang*): masters of clothing, food, headgear, banquets, baths, and writing. The first five masters’ posts were usually filled by eunuchs. The Master of Writing, which was the most important post, could be occupied by either a eunuch or a civilian official. Besides the Six Masters, the Inner Court was also filled with numerous officials with no specific administrative positions, with titles such as Gentlemen, Talents, Regular Attendant, Cavalier Attendant, Middle Grandee, and so on. Most Inner Court officials were administratively under the control of the two ministries of the government—the superintendent of the palace and superintendent of the lesser treasury. In other words, the inner court and the government were not entirely separated. The officials who carried the master titles became increasingly important in the government during the Han and later dynasties. In the Tang dynasty the cabinet was reduced to six ministries, each headed by an official titled master.

of Inflated Titles.” According to Finer, the prestige of the emperor’s inner circle engenders an expansion of that circle to the point that it is no longer intimate. This inclines the emperor to transfer his trust to a smaller, closer, more intimate circle.¹⁰¹ Since efforts to destroy an existing bureaucratic structure would be met with strong resistance, assertive emperors often left it, its staff, and their titles in place and created a new office with the same or similar functions and new titles; hence, the “Law of Inflated Titles.” In any event, the whole bureaucracy swelled as a result.¹⁰²

The complicated relationship between the emperor and the bureaucracy did not end there. Under an assertive and active emperor, as those who were closer to the emperor became more powerful, the role of procedure-based bureaucratic decision-making in the government declined, and the regime became more autocratic. This immediately created problems. Most importantly, the emperor’s wives’ relatives, the emperor’s personal secretaries, and the palace eunuchs were by no means more loyal to the emperor than the officials, and their increased influence weakened time-tested decision-making procedures and also led to pernicious palace intrigues.¹⁰³ These afflicted most of both the Western Han and the Eastern Han dynasties—the court was dominated by the relatives of the emperor’s wives and later by eunuchs as well,¹⁰⁴ and the palace intrigues among them contributed to the collapse of both. This historical lesson thus motivated emperors of later dynasties to rely more on their bureaucracies. This reliance took the form of (1) procedures that more effectively limited the power of the chancellors, generals, and other high-ranking officials, (2) more discriminating methods of official recruitment, and (3) more effective censorial apparatuses to oversee the performance of the bureaucracy.¹⁰⁵

Although the bureaucracy derived its authority from the emperor, there were structures and situations in which it limited the power of the emperor. First, the emperor needed to be educated from a very young age. When Confucianism became the state ideology, a future emperor would receive many years of education from eminent Confucian scholars.¹⁰⁶ By the time he ascended the throne, he therefore tended to think like his officials and to see his role as they did. Second, although the emperor was the ultimate source of

101. Finer (1997, p. 491).

102. Du You (735–812), a Tang dynasty scholar-official, is known to have remarked, “The old titles are never abolished, but new ones are created every day.” See also Zheng (1992, p. 20).

103. For example, four of the thirteen chancellors who worked for Emperor Wu were the emperor’s relatives, but three of them, Dou Ying, Gongsun He, and Liu Qumao, were brutally killed during the palace intrigues and one (the emperor’s uncle Tian Fen) literally died of fright, despite emerging victorious from a palace intrigue.

104. Y. Li (2002, pp. 200–202).

105. Lin (1992).

106. The teacher of the crown prince was called “senior tutor” (*tai fu*). During the Western Han dynasty, however, only four men who acted as a teacher of the crown prince held this title (Loewe 2006, p. 23). In later dynasties, most teachers of the crown prince held this or an equivalent title.

bureaucratic authority, in virtually no dynasty was any emperor (except for the founding rulers of each dynasty) able to take the initiative in policy formation and implementation. Most routine matters of administration never even reached the emperor. Even if new issues or new proposals (from officials who had encountered major, nonroutine problems) came to the attention of the emperor, he would encounter serious resistance if he handed down a decision without following certain bureaucratic procedures.¹⁰⁷ Third, officials had the right to criticize an emperor. Numerous censorial officials, appointed by the emperor, with titles such as Serving within the Palace (*ji shi zhong*), Advisory Counsellor (*jian da fu*), and Gentlemen Consultant (*yi lang*), had as one of their most important duties the discussion, criticism, or rejection of decisions made by the chancellor or other top officials, or even decisions made by the emperor himself. Even after a decision was made, officials of varying ranks could still write memorials voicing their concerns and views about it. Though criticism sometimes infuriated an emperor to the point of decreeing a severe punishment for the critic, “public opinion” (within the bureaucracy) sometimes compelled an emperor to reverse an earlier decision or even to publish an acknowledgment of his mistakes, “thereby indicating that he was devoted to maintaining traditional moral values and standards of behavior.”¹⁰⁸ Moreover, officials who were punished or even executed for their daring criticism of their emperor were frequently portrayed as heroes in the historiography and never lacked emulators.¹⁰⁹

The Structure of the Han Bureaucracy

The structure of bureaucracy changed greatly from one dynasty to another, but some of the most important features of the Western Han bureaucracy were retained throughout the history of imperial China. The following discussion of the Western Han bureaucracy can, therefore, serve as a baseline model of the structure and nature of the premodern Chinese bureaucracy.

The Western Han bureaucracy was an enormous apparatus. In 2 CE, it boasted 120,285 officials (excluding military officers).¹¹⁰ Loewe speculates that this number may not include lower-level local officials, but a rough estimate (see note 111)

107. Loewe (2006, pp. 10–11).

108. Loewe (2006, p. 13).

109. See Loewe (2006, pp. 14–16) for a list of examples, recorded in the historical texts, of officials' criticisms of their emperors. Similar examples can be found throughout Chinese history.

110. The Southern Song bureaucracy has been estimated at 20,000 officials and the Qing bureaucracy at less than 40,000 (Chaffee 1995, p. 27; Michael 1964, p. 58). These figures, however, cannot be compared with those of the Han dynasty without qualification. The three dynasties differed enormously in the size of their territory and population. Moreover, the Southern Song and Qing totals exclude numerous clerks and runners, who are included in the Han total. During the Qing dynasty, the magistrate of a densely populated county might hire over a thousand clerks and runners to assist him in his job. Thus, the bureaucracy tended toward expansion in later dynasties, though non-China specialists often cite the small number of officials in later Chinese dynasties as evidence of the weakness of the Chinese empire.

supports this total.¹¹¹ There were eighteen grades of office in the Western Han bureaucracy, and officials were ranked and paid according to the grade of the office they occupied. Their compensation was calculated in *shi* and *dou* of grain (1 *shi* = 29.5 kg., 1 *dou* = 1.996 liters). Actually officials were paid in a combination of grains and cash.¹¹²

At the top of the Western Han bureaucracy rested the three, later two, most senior officials, or the three Excellencies (*san gong*): chancellor, imperial counsellor and, for a time, the supreme commander.¹¹³ The chancellor took charge of government administration, the imperial counsellor led the censorial branch of the bureaucracy, and the supreme commander was responsible for military affairs.¹¹⁴ Unlike the Roman Empire, the Han Empire was dominated by civilian officials rather than generals. In fact, the Western Han chancellor also headed the military, and most supreme commanders were civilians when they occupied the office. Although the structure checked and balanced power within the government, the chancellor was undoubtedly at its center.¹¹⁵ Reporting to the chancellor

111. Loewe (1986, p. 466). In the unearthed Donghai Commandery (mostly in present-day Jiangsu) documents dating from the late Western Han dynasty, the total number of commandery officials is given as 2,203, and most of these officials were local personnel, such as accessory clerk (492), chief of the officials' hostel (688), and *dou*-salary clerks (501; Liao 2005, p. 62). We know that Western Han comprised 1,587 county-level units at the time, and that Donghai commandery comprised thirty-eight counties (Liao 2005, pp. 58–61). Assuming the same number of officials in each county, it can be roughly estimated that the total number of late Western Han officials below the commandery level was $2,203 \times 1,587/38 = 92,004$. Adding central government, censorial, and provincial officials to this rough estimate of 92,004 produces a total of 120,285 officials. This seems plausible. The bureaucracy expanded further during the Eastern Han dynasty. According to Donghai documents, Haixi, the county with the maximum number of officials during the late Western Han dynasty, had 107, and Cheng, the county with the minimum number, had twenty-two (Liao 2005, p. 62). Contrast this with the Eastern Han dynasty, when Henan county had 927 officials and Luoyang county had 796 (Liao 2005, p. 57). Henan and Luoyang counties were both very close to the Eastern Han capital, which probably accounts for some of the difference; still, their large number of officials must also reflect a steady expansion of the bureaucracy during the Han dynasty.

112. The highest rank—chancellor—was paid 10,000 *shi*. The next received 2,000 *shi* and “equivalent to 2,000 *shi*.” Numerous officials, including the chancellor's chief assistants, the nine ministers, and heads of the provincial and commandery governments, were ranked at 2,000 *shi*. From there the stipends (and the corresponding ranks) decreased by grade to 1,000 *shi* and “equivalent to 1,000 *shi*,” 600 *shi* and “equivalent to 600 *shi*,” 400 *shi* and “equivalent to 400 *shi*,” 300 *shi* and “equivalent to 300 *shi*,” 200 *shi* and “equivalent to 200 *shi*,” 100 *shi* and “equivalent to 100 *shi*.” The lowest ranks were called *dou*-salary clerks. Besides regular salaries, the emperor also bestowed substantial gifts on metropolitan officials: cash, silk, food, and wine. County magistrates mostly received between 600 and 1,000 *shi*. Yan (2002, p. 30) has shown that even during the late Warring States period and in the state of Qin, where the bureaucratization process was the most developed, the gifts bestowed on officials at each rank were of much greater value than the salaries attached to the official duties. According to Bielenstein (1980, pp. 127–28), all officials except for the *dou*-salary clerks were able to live comfortably on their salaries.

113. English translations of the Han dynasty official titles used in this book are based on Loewe (2000, pp. 756–68) and Bielenstein (1980).

114. At the beginning of the Western Han dynasty, the chancellor was supreme over the entire bureaucracy. As part of the efforts to curtail the power of chancellors, the supreme commander and the imperial counsellor were given increased powers. By the end of the Western Han dynasty, the chancellor, the supreme commander, and the imperial counsellor became known as the Three Excellencies to stress their equal status (Bu 2002, chap. 4; Y. Li 2002, chap. 4).

115. The chancellor's office was staffed by 382 members in 117 BCE (Bu 2002, p. 295). In addition, the chancellor's secretariat comprised thirteen bureaus (*cao*; Qian, Ch'ien Mu, 1982, pp. 3–5):

- (1) West Bureau (appointed officials below the rank of 2,000 *shi*)
- (2) East Bureau (promoted, demoted, and dismissed officials below the rank of 2,000 *shi*, including military officers)

were nine ministers, each in charge of multiple bureaus. They were superintendent of ceremonial, superintendent of the palace, superintendent of the guards, superintendent of transport (Grand Coachman), superintendent of trials, superintendent of state visits, superintendent of the imperial clan, superintendent of agriculture, and superintendent of the lesser treasury.¹¹⁶

Under the central government were tiers of local government. In the late Western Han dynasty the empire was divided into thirteen provinces, which controlled 103 commanderies. These were further divided into 1,500-plus county-level units. Heads of provinces and commanderies were 2,000-*shi*-rank officials, equal to the ministers of the central government. The central government also sent one regional inspector to each province. During the Han dynasty, the title and rank of this office changed several times, but most of the time it was a relatively low 600-*shi* rank.¹¹⁷

Like a multilayered Chinese box, each layer of Han bureaucracy bore a close structural resemblance to the others. During the Western Han dynasty every commandery was headed by a governor (*tai shou*), who was in charge of all the civilian and military affairs in his commandery, including the administration of criminal law. The governor's office was staffed by associates and assistants and controlled many bureaus. The governor was also assisted by an equivalent 2,000-*shi*-rank official, the chief commander (*du wei*), who was in charge of military matters, including training the local army and militia, suppressing bandits, and inspecting fortifications and beacons. This office was also staffed by associates and assistants, heads of various bureaus, and military officers. County-level government followed a similar structure. Even at the local level, Han bureaucracy was complex.

- (3) Bureau of Imperial Household (saw to revenues of imperial household; activities of imperial household, including sacrifices to the imperial ancestors)
- (4) Bureau of Memorials (passed on memorials to emperor)
- (5) Bureau of Litigation (adjudicated criminal cases)
- (6) Bureau of Communication and Standards (set standard weights and measures; supervised postal service)
- (7) Bureau of Military Transportation (army-related transport, military logistics)
- (8) Bureau of Bandit Control
- (9) Bureau of Executions
- (10) Bureau of Soldiers (affairs related to military service)
- (11) Bureau of Gold (issued currency and operated state monopolies)
- (12) Bureau of Granaries (supervised levies, taxes, grain storage)
- (13) Bureau of Yellow Cabinet (maintained government records and supervised all other bureaus)

116. The functions of the nine ministers somewhat overlapped with the thirteen bureaus under the direct control of the chancellor. Overlapping jurisdiction was a major characteristic of the Han bureaucracy and may also have functioned as a checks-and-balances and a performance-checking mechanism.

117. Inspectors were not allowed to interfere in the work of the local government; but their authority to evaluate the performances of local officials and report back to the central government gave them enormous power. To minimize their power to intimidate, a low-ranking 600-*shi* inspector was appointed to check the work of a 2,000-*shi*, high-ranking official. In fact, during the Western Han dynasty only the imperial counsellor held a 2,000-*shi* rank; all other officials in the censorial system had low ranks (Ge 1992, pp. 170–77).

Bielenstein provides a glossary with over 900 Han dynasty official titles,¹¹⁸ and even so comprehensive a glossary contains only seven of twenty-one official titles of the officials and clerks working in county administration.¹¹⁹

Official Recruitment and Promotion and their Problems

In the Han dynasty, children of high-level officials were always an important source of new officials. During the reign of Emperor Wu, merit-based official recruitment became another channel for entering government. In a 134 BCE edict, Emperor Wu ordered each commandery and princely kingdom to recommend annually a Filially Pious and an Incorruptible (*xiao lian*) for service in the central government.¹²⁰ Local officials who failed to make recommendations or who recommended unqualified persons were punishable by dismissal.¹²¹ Men recommended for central government service underwent further examination.¹²² Those who passed this central government scrutiny normally were titled Gentlemen and acted as imperial bodyguards for a number of years. If they gained the emperor's trust, they would then receive regular official positions.¹²³ The recommendation system was rudimentary, but it was the forerunner of the more discerning civil-service examination system that developed in the Tang dynasty (618–907).¹²⁴ The Western Han government also opened an academy to train students using classic Chinese philosophic texts centered on Confucianism. By the mid-second century CE, annual enrollment at the academy exceeded 30,000.¹²⁵

Recommendation was the staffing procedure that did most to Confucianize the Chinese bureaucracy. Mastering the Confucian classics and espousing

118. Bielenstein (1980).

119. Liao (2005, p. 53).

120. The state also recruited government officials by issuing special edicts. Emperor Wu requested senior officials and imperial relatives to recommend individuals who were “capable-and-good,” “sincere-and-upright,” and “frank and able to admonish unflinchingly” in one of his edicts. In 107 CE, Emperor An of the Eastern Han dynasty (r. 106–125) issued an edict that stated, “I summon the Excellencies and Ministers, the officials of the Inner and Outer Courts, the governors of commanderies, and chancellors of the princely kingdoms to recommend one person in each of the following categories: those who are capable and good, sincere and upright; those with special skills; those with political and administrative talents, those who understand the past and present, and those who are able to speak frankly and admonish unflinchingly” (*History of the Eastern Han*, “Biography of Emperor An”; reproduced in Li 1965, p. 206).

121. Bielenstein (1980, p. 135).

122. The Han state also recruited officials in other ways. Special-task administrators, such as the officials who supervised salt and iron production, were often recruited from among former salt and iron merchants (even though merchants were not allowed to become regular officials). Some people became officials by self-recommendation. Some soldiers were appointed imperial bodyguards (Gentlemen) based on their courage and skill in battle. Officials ranking at 2,000 *shi* or above were allowed to send their sons to be imperial bodyguards. Finally, when the state was short of money, it would sell noble titles and official ranks (Chang 2007, p. 131).

123. Later on, each province was required to recommend one Abundant Talent (*mao cai*) annually. Unlike the Filially Pious and Incorrupt, Abundant Talents did not undergo a probationary period; once recommended, many were appointed directly to county magistracies (Bielenstein 1980, pp. 136–37; Zheng 1992, pp. 197–98).

124. Western Han bureaucratic recruitment and promotion has been extensively studied (e.g., An and Xiong 1984; Bu 2002; Bielenstein 1980, chap. 6; Huang 1989; Yang 2005).

125. Bielenstein (1980, p. 139).

the Confucian moral code became the individual candidate's best vehicle for entering officialdom. And becoming an official was the most assured channel of upward mobility for commoners. Given these interconnected requisites, *shi* gradually abandoned Warring States pluralism in favor of the Confucian classics.¹²⁶ This process was not as universal as some scholars have implied,¹²⁷ nor did it take place without resistance, but it was the start of a momentous intellectual and sociopolitical development that patterned Chinese history.

Being recruited was the first rung on the ladder of success. Next came promotion. The majority of Han dynasty officials were recruited to office based on their family background as well as their mastery of the Confucian classics and adherence to the Confucian moral code, but their promotions were largely based on performance.¹²⁸ Good Confucian scholars without political and administrative talent had little chance of moving up.¹²⁹ For instance, Gongsun Hong (d. 121 BCE) was Emperor Wu's chancellor (124–121 BCE). Famous for his expertise in Confucian learning, he entered officialdom in 140 BCE, at sixty years of age, by passing an examination. But promotions came very quickly because of his administrative ability and Legalist policy orientation.¹³⁰ By contrast, Dong Zhongshu's official career was rather unsuccessful, even though he was arguably a better thinker.¹³¹

Liao, a contemporary historian, has examined the promotion records of ninety-five individuals found in the Western Han official documents unearthed in the Donghai Commandery region.¹³² He discovered that sixty (63 percent) were promoted for good performance; three, because they were recommended as Abundant Talents; sixteen, for being Filially Pious and Incorruptible; and two, for being Sincere and Upright. These last three categories, numbering twenty-one in all, made up 22 percent of the ninety-five. Eleven of the ninety-five (11.6 percent) owed their promotions to their ability to maintain local public order (whether by decreasing crime or by suppressing minor incidents of unrest), and three of them (3.2 percent) were promoted by the emperor's special dispensation. If we add the eleven promoted for their ability to keep local public order to the sixty promoted for good performance, the number of people in that category increases to seventy-one (75 percent). Although most of these officials were low-ranking county

126. Ge (2001, pp. 261–73); Yu (2000); Zhou (2000, chap. 9).

127. Ge (2001, pp. 255–76); Zhou (2000, chaps. 8–9).

128. Needless to say, personal relations with superiors always figured importantly in the actual promotion. For example, *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Du Ye"; reproduced in Tang 1962, p. 3474) relates: "When Wang Shang was a Commander-in-Chief and Wei General, Du Ye was his Master of Records. Du became a confidant of Wang and was later appointed to the position of Attending Secretary because of Wang's recommendation."

129. Officials lacking administrative talents would be appointed as erudites, tutors to the princes and other members of the royal family, remonstrances, censors, etc.

130. *History of the Western Han* ("Biography of Gongsun Hong"; reproduced in Tang 1962, pp. 2613–19).

131. Queen (1996, chap. 2).

132. Liao (2005).

officers or clerks, these numbers show clearly that on-the-job performance was the most important criterion for promotion in the Western Han bureaucracy. Behind the façade of Confucianism, performance-based promotion gave the bureaucracy a pronounced Legalist character.

Because the Han dynasty bureaucracy was divided into two tracks—the clerks (*li*) and officials (*guan*)¹³³—the promotion process was slightly complicated. Clerks were usually selected and promoted by government officials of various grades; the appointment and promotion of officials lay with the emperor. If a clerk performed well, he might be promoted into officialdom.¹³⁴

Three major problems affected the Han recruitment system for officials, all of which exerted long-term impact. First, since good conduct (such as “filially pious and incorruptible,” “capable and good,” and “sincere and upright”) were criteria for recommendation, people pretended to such qualities. *History of the Eastern Han*, for instance, tells of Xu Jing, recommended for being “filially pious and incorruptible,” who became an official.¹³⁵ As a way of promoting his two younger brothers, Xu divided the family property and took the largest and best part for himself, giving his two brothers lesser shares. They did not complain. In this way, the two younger brothers earned good reputations, which brought them recommendations and recruitment into officialdom. A few years later, however, the eldest brother revealed his true motive for dividing the property unfairly and returned what he had “misappropriated” (now increased threefold in value under his good management) to his two younger brothers. Now the eldest brother was widely praised. Stories like this, commonplace in the Han dynasty received texts, demonstrate that the method of recruiting officials facilitated the development of an elite culture marred by pretentiousness and hypocrisy, undercutting one of the recruitment system’s original purposes—to select officials with good morals.

Second, the number of individuals who could be recommended was very small, but there were naturally many local talents. This led to two related problems. (1) The officials who had the authority to make recommendations used it to extend their nepotistic networks, and the individuals who received recommendations regarded their recommenders as patrons. This made for strong patron-client networks, and attendant corruption, among Eastern Han officials. (2) Since a member of a politically powerful family had a better chance of being recommended, many such families grew even more powerful.

133. Bureaucrats working in government units below the county level were regarded as clerks. Bureaucrats working at county level or above, or in major branches of a county government, or in major branches or bureaus of a commandery, or in the central government were all officials. The subordinates of these officials were also clerks.

134. During the later Chinese dynasties fewer and fewer clerks could be promoted to officials. During the Han dynasty, however, capable clerks were quite commonly promoted to officials.

135. *History of the Eastern Han* (“Biography of Xu Jing”; reproduced in Li 1965, p. 2471). Xu Jing held the advisory counsellor position during the Eastern Han dynasty. An English translation of this story appears in Chü (1972, p. 299).

Third, and most importantly, the sons and pupils of teachers with powerful political connections were the mostly likely to be recommended, which sent many ambitious people rushing to their doorsteps. A famous teacher at the time might have several thousand pupils registered under his name, and members of his family could rise to the rank of the Three Excellencies for multiple generations.¹³⁶ This kind of mentoring system further encouraged the dominance of big, powerful families in Han politics.¹³⁷ The strongly aristocratic tendency of the Han dynasty bureaucracy was to shape the Chinese elite structure for almost a millennium,¹³⁸ and it only broke down completely in the Song dynasty, when the civil-service examination was greatly expanded (chapter 12).

Integration of the Ideological and Political-Power Actors

Problems aside, the promotion of Confucianism was still the most significant innovation of the Western Han government. Confucianism as a “bureaucracy ideology” had facilitated the recruitment of like-minded people, enhanced elite support of the government, and maintained a set of common ethical standards.¹³⁹ Moreover, the Confucian rituals practiced in the Chinese family and by the state also instilled a quasi-religious emotion in the practitioners.

Any bureaucracy tends over time to be marred by some intrinsic weaknesses, including the erosion of morality among the officials, a decreasing sense of solidarity (the behavior of bureaucrats becomes devoid of emotional attachment), and the abandonment of the government’s professed goals in favor of other priorities that often undermined those goals.¹⁴⁰ Confucianism as a “bureaucracy ideology” slowed the development of these problems within the bureaucracy.

To summarize, what was established during the Han dynasty was a centralized bureaucratic state that, though it ruled society using instrumental, Legalist methods, based its legitimacy on Confucianism. In this new political crystallization, the emperor was still legitimized as the Son of Heaven; but his deserving of the Heavenly Mandate was subject to the judgment of Confucian bureaucrats selected for their learning and integrity. Moreover, the emperor could only exercise his power with the assistance of Confucian officials. This political system provided the state with legitimacy and society with moral guidance. It fostered checks and balances between the emperor and his bureaucrats, and it helped to create a large elite population along with the homogeneous culture that identified and united that population (after the seventh century CE, the elite population was sustained by the regular civil-service examination system). The political system was also characterized by a symbiotic relationship between the emperor and the Confucian

136. Zheng (1992, pp. 202–4).

137. Qian (Ch’ien Mu, 1982, p. 34); Huang (1989, pp. 108–15); Wang (1981, chap. 7).

138. Chü (1972).

139. Downs (1967, p. 237–39).

140. Woodside (2006).

elite and some degree of upward mobility for the lower classes into officialdom by way of conduct. I refer to this political arrangement as a *Confucian-Legalist state*.

It is tempting to compare the achievements of the Han dynasty with that of the Roman Empire. In my view, the Roman Empire surpassed the Han dynasty in most aspects. The Roman Empire did not undergo Chinese-style massive popular uprisings or suffer, as seriously as China did, the effects of the degeneration of the late dynastic rulers. The Roman Empire therefore lasted much longer than any single Chinese dynasty. The Roman army was able to maintain over 300,000 troops, well trained and paid, for several hundred years,¹⁴¹ whereas the status of soldiers and quality of China's army significantly declined after universal military service ended during the Eastern Han dynasty.¹⁴² Finally, according to one estimate,¹⁴³ the Roman economy was more monetized than its Chinese counterpart.¹⁴⁴ Yet, despite the strength of its empire, Roman civilization collapsed, while Chinese civilization endured. Their different fates owed largely to the different relationship in each between ideological power and political power. In the Roman Empire, although the elite shared a secular culture, they remained pluralistic in their religious beliefs, especially after the rise of Christianity. In China, Confucianism over time became the dominant political ideology and the normative base of cooperation between emperors and their officials. Although Chinese dynasties did not endure, once a new ruler had unified China, he would invariably see Confucianism as the best ideology of rule and the best basis of cooperation between the state and society, and would therefore establish a new dynasty that more or less followed the Confucian-Legalist state model shaped by the Han dynasty. Chinese civilization (not any single Chinese dynasty), therefore, acquired an exceptional durability that was lacking in the civilization of the Roman Empire.

SUMMARY

The triumph of Legalism strengthened the military power of the state and facilitated the unification of China. But Qin employed its political and military power

141. Watson (1969). The figure does not include the troops stationed around Rome or the naval forces.

142. Huang, Shao, Lu, and Zhao (1998, chap. 4); Lewis (2000b). In fact, Han military strength declined significantly even during the reign of Emperor Wu. In the final years of Emperor Wu's reign, the Han army experienced repeated setbacks in its wars with Xiongnu (Chen, Li, and Liu 1998, pp. 234–46). Thereafter, the Western Han dynasty could never defeat the Xiongnu but only hold them at bay. During the late Eastern Han period, the Xiongnu further declined, more as a result of natural disasters and internal strife than the strength of the Han army.

143. Scheidel (2009, p. 202).

144. It is estimated that the volume of silver coins in circulation was about 1.716 billion *denarii* during the mid-second century CE. In addition, three billion *denarii* worth of gold coins and a large number of bronze coins circulated at the time (Hopkins 2009, pp. 198–202). By contrast, Han dynasty coinage was dominated by the less-valuable bronze coins. The Han monetary system was also much less stable, plagued by frequent policy changes and periods of runaway inflation (Hou 2005, pp. 233–40). See also Crawford (1974) and Duncan-Jones (1994) for the scale of Rome's monetary economy.

without restraint and therefore proved to be highly unstable. Shortly after the First Emperor's death, mass revolts resulted in the overthrow of the mighty Qin, and from the succeeding civil wars, the Western Han dynasty emerged victorious. The early Western Han period was a time of great uncertainty. In politics, the state experimented with feudal and bureaucratic forms of government. As an ideology, Legalism was out of favor and temporarily replaced by Huang-Lao philosophy, as scholars of the time searched for an ideological foundation for political order. Amid the fast-paced metamorphoses of Chinese politics and ideology, a very active and ambitious emperor—Emperor Wu—ascended to the throne.

In his more than half-century reign, Emperor Wu defeated the Xiongnu nomads and greatly expanded China's territory, reinstated the bureaucratic mode of governance, and largely eliminated the problems caused by feudatories that had so nettled early Western Han politics. Most importantly, he introduced imperial Confucianism and reintroduced Legalism into the state ideology, thus giving shape to the model of the Confucian-Legalist state. It was this last major initiative that had the most lasting impact on the history of China. In hindsight, during the reign of Emperor Wu there came into being a highly resilient political system: it relied on practical Legalist measures to rule society and at the same time based its legitimacy on Confucian morality. That system faced numerous challenges: the aristocratization of the bureaucracy between the Eastern Han and the early Tang dynasties; repeated nomadic invasions, nomadic occupations, and nomadic rule; repeated revivals of militarism before the Song dynasty; the advent and spread of Buddhism (and other persuasions); and the advent of commercialism during and after the Song dynasty. Yet, not until the arrival of the West in the nineteenth century did any of these forces undermine the Confucian-Legalist political system in any fundamental way. Facing these challenges and repeated end-of-dynasty devastation, this political system not only survived and developed and penetrated deeper into society, but also gave rise to numerous patterns of Chinese history that we will explore in the final part of this book.

PART IV

The Confucian-Legalist State and Patterns of Chinese History

Pre-Song Challenges to the Confucian-Legalist Political Framework and Song Responses

AGE OF BUDDHISM

The Han dynasty political system suffered from three major problems that not only contributed to the dynasty's breakdown but also shaped social structures for the next several hundred years. First, the symbiotic relationship between the emperor and the bureaucracy had not yet been firmly institutionalized. Although the bureaucracy had become indispensable to the empire, the emperors retained ample freedom (as well as the inclination) to enhance their personal power; their wives's relatives and thousands of eunuchs who served in the palace and thus had close access to the emperor also exerted tremendous influence on politics. Rival factions, taking advantage of the "atmosphere" of personal rule and palace intrigues, turned some emperors into puppets, which contributed to the demise of both the Western and Eastern Han dynasties (chapter 9). Second, the Han system of recommending persons for official positions greatly benefited those in high places (chapter 9); it facilitated the creation of networks of offices beholden to the grandee who had recommended them to office, and it similarly facilitated the formation of the "great families," in which high offices were passed down for generations as if they were hereditary titles.¹ These great families undermined the authority of the state in peacetime. Moreover, when the central state was weak, some members of the great families became warlords. Third, as the power of the great families grew, so did their estates, which were mostly tax-exempt. This naturally increased the tax burden on free-holding peasants, to the point of compelling them either to become bandits or to turn their freeholds over to the great families,² thus making their own bit of land also tax-exempt, but themselves into a class of either serfs or "landless persons." During the late Eastern Han dynasty, the landless "floating population" launched hundreds of uprisings, culminating in the countrywide Yellow Turban Rebellion in 184 CE. Although the rebellion was suppressed, Eastern Han

1. The great families maintained a distinctive culture and decorum, discriminated against people of humble origins, and intermarried to preserve their social status (Mather 1990). Scholars have referred to them as "aristocracies" and compared them with European nobilities (Eberhard 1965, pp. 22–47), but newer studies have challenged this view (Dien 2007, p. 14).

2. Lin (2003, p. 928); Wright (1967, p. 19).

politics was thereafter controlled by several great families and a few warlords who had played important roles in suppressing the rebellion. Their civil embroilments culminated in the so-called Age of Disunion.

The Age of Disunion can be divided into four overlapping periods: the Three Kingdoms (220–265), the Western Jin dynasty (265–316), the Sixteen States (304–439), and the Southern and Northern dynasties (386–581).³ It has been regarded as an era of chaos. The final years of the Western Jin dynasty wreaked war destruction so devastating that in many regions it caused terrible depopulation, reduced living standards to basic subsistence levels, and drove money out of circulation.⁴ The “overlords” and great families controlled large private armies,⁵ and, in many cases, the dynasty army responded more to one of the families than to the reigning emperor.⁶ The state had to share its authority with the great families and, at a certain point, even with Buddhist monasteries.⁷ The political influence of Confucianism waned significantly, creating a space for the rise of unorthodox philosophies and religions. Demographically, the registered population fell from the sixty million of the Eastern Han dynasty to about fifteen million by the end of the Western Jin dynasty.⁸ During the Eastern Han dynasty the majority of Chinese lived in northern China. About the time of the “Yongjia upheavals” (307–313), the registered population in the north had been reduced to as little as five to six million.⁹ Many highly populated regions became deserted, allowing the nomads and semi-nomads to migrate south and take control of those regions. During the Sixteen States period thirteen states established in northern China were ruled by nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples, of five different origins, who had migrated into China after the fall of the Eastern Han (similar to the migration of Germanic tribes into the Roman Empire at about the same time).¹⁰

3. The periodization differs slightly in different writings.

4. Jiang (2005, pp. 459, 465); Wang (2003, p. 5). Even during the Age of Disunion, commercial activities were little affected in places less touched by war. See Jiang (2005) for a balanced assessment of the economy during the Age of Disunion.

5. Both the great families and the local strongmen had contributed to the rise of warlordism. During the period between the end of the Eastern Han and the Three Kingdoms, leading warlords either came from the great families (e.g., Sun Quan, Liu Biao, Yuan Shao) or originated as local strongmen (e.g., Liu Bei and Cao Cao; De Crespigny 1990). During the Age of Disunion, northern China was also dotted with fortresses (*wubao*) constructed by the great families or by local notables for self-defense. These defensive communities also formed alliances and produced warlords (Graff 2002a, chap. 3).

6. Tao (2007).

7. Chen (1998); Tang (1993, pp. 159–78).

8. Ge (2002, pp. 424, 464, 473). The plummeting population figure must also reflect the weakening state's capacity to conduct accurate censuses, and the fact that increasing number of the working poor were forced to turn themselves into dependents of the great families or Buddhist monasteries and therefore were not counted (He 1995, pp. 411–16).

9. According to Tan (1934), during the War of Eight Princes (290–305) at least 900,000 Chinese fled to the south.

10. Gernet (1996, p. 186) has discussed the ethnic origins of the rulers in the Sixteen States. The Xianbei, a proto-Mongol people, also entered China during the Age of Disunion, but later than the peoples who had migrated south directly after the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty. The Xianbei moved first into lands formerly occupied by the Xiongnu, and from there entered northern China. Yet they conquered northern China and played a key role in China's reunification.

Some Western historians have labeled this period of China's history "medieval," to invoke a comparison with Dark Age Europe. The difference is that the Chinese apocalypse did not last long. New forms of art, new ideas, and new technologies flourished during the Age of Disunion.¹¹ By the mid-fifth century, the registered population in China had recovered to about fifty million,¹² and commercial activities may have attained or surpassed Han dynasty levels.¹³ Political power was gradually recentralized,¹⁴ the nomadic and semi-nomadic invaders had become increasingly sinicized, and Confucianism was regaining political influence. In 590, China was reunified under the short-lived Sui dynasty (581–618), which immediately gave away to the long-lasting Tang dynasty. The Tang rulers consciously modeled their state after the Han, and Tang can readily qualify as a Confucian-Legalist state.¹⁵

Many elements contributed to the revival of a unified Confucian-Legalist state. Although China in the Age of Disunion was no longer under unified rule, the institutional and cultural traditions did not disappear.¹⁶ The southern Chinese dynasties still tried to maintain bureaucratic government, and the northern states of nomadic or semi-nomadic origin attempted to emulate the Han model, even though its effectiveness was significantly compromised by numerous formidable regional power holders.¹⁷ The core areas of Chinese civilization still remained at about 200 million square kilometers, and the lack of any major alternative civilizations or polities in the vicinity meant that reestablishing a unified empire was much easier in China than in Europe (chapter 8). The incessant wars during the Age of Disunion also compelled the embattled states to carry out self-strengthening reforms, which facilitated the revival of central rule at the expense of the great families. Most importantly, the rulers of the nomadic

11. Dien (2007); Pearce, Spiro, and Ebrey (2001).

12. Ge (2002, p. 475). The population of Jiankang (present-day Nanjing) might have reached a million during the Liang dynasty (502–557; Liu 2001, p. 35).

13. Gernet (1996, pp. 183–84); Jiang (2005); Liu (2001). By comparison with the Han dynasty rulers, most rulers during the Age of Disunion turned a more laissez-faire gaze on commercial activities. Buddhist monasteries of the time were also heavily involved in commerce (Gernet 1995).

14. In southern China, the power of the great families started to decline after the Sun En-Lu Xun Rebellion in 399, which also contributed to the collapse of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420). After the Hou Jing rebellion in 548, the great families in the south largely disintegrated. In the north, the power of the great families was also declining during the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), especially during the reign of Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499; Jin and Liu 1988, p. 254).

15. Ebrey (2001, p. ix) has reached a similar conclusion by comparing the cases of China and Europe: To "most observers, the seventh-century Tang emperor Taizong had more in common with the first-century BCE emperor Han Wu Di than Charlemagne had with Augustus, and the seventh-century classical scholar Kong Yingda had more in common with his second-century predecessor Zheng Xuan than any Renaissance scholar did with any Roman one."

16. Pearce, Spiro, and Ebrey (2001, p. 3).

17. When the great families were collectively at their most redoubtable, the key official positions in most states were not filled by officials selected for merit but by the heads of the great families. Grafflin (1990) called the bureaucracy of that time "pseudobureaucracy."

and semi-nomadic peoples increasingly embraced Chinese culture—including Confucian-influenced politics—if only for their own advantage.

During the Age of Disunion three non-Confucian traditions propagated widely: *Xuanxue* philosophy,¹⁸ religious Daoism, and Buddhism. *Xuanxue* was the intellectual achievement of later Eastern Han scholars, who found neither truth nor utility in the chaotic politics and stiffening orthodoxy of Confucian learning. These scholars' gnostic and ontological speculations were quite new in Chinese philosophy. *Xuanxue* did not have a lasting impact on Chinese history, but it temporarily undermined Confucianism; it also provided a vocabulary for the translation of Buddhist texts.¹⁹ Religious Daoism had its beginning in the Age of Total War and in the Qin dynasty's protoreligious Daoism, and it exploded among the peasantry with the outbreak of the Yellow Turban Rebellion in 184 CE.²⁰ The revolt, led by religious Daoist faith healers, engulfed northeastern China and was only completely put down after several decades. Although religious Daoism elevated Laozi to its highest deity, it differed entirely from the philosophical Daoism of Laozi, which abjured mysticism, the search for immortality, and all liturgical activities, all of which were essential to religious Daoism (Hereafter, the word "Daoism" refers only to "religious Daoism" unless otherwise specified).²¹

The most important ideological development of the time, which significantly shaped the patterns of later Chinese history, was the entry and spread of Buddhism. Buddhism entered China during the Eastern Han dynasty²² but until the Age of Disunion had little impact on the life and thought of the Chinese. During the Age of Disunion, partly owing to the declining political influence of Confucianism, Buddhism started to flourish. In southern China, where the political influence of Confucianism remained very strong, Buddhism was propagated mainly by the great families and by scholars who were disappointed with the Confucian orthodoxy.²³ In northern China, Buddhism had the sponsorship of nomadic and semi-nomadic rulers during the Sixteen States era. The following analysis focuses only on the changing fate of Buddhism in northern China, because China was

18. In the past, *Xuanxue* has been labeled Neo-Daoism because *Xuanxue* scholars adopted some of the concepts and vocabulary used by Zhuangzi and Laozi. See Lu (2006) and Luo (2005) on *Xuanxue*.

19. The lack of scholars well versed in both Chinese and Sanskrit and the immense cultural differences between China and India made translating Buddhist texts extremely difficult when these texts first began entering China. The concepts and vocabulary developed by the *Xuanxue* scholars were a notable help to the early translators (Demiéville 1986, p. 825; Wright 1967, pp. 46–47; Zürcher 1959, pp. 2–4). See Wright (1967, pp. 36–37) for examples of alterations in the original Buddhist concepts so as to make them meaningful within Chinese culture.

20. Demiéville (1986, pp. 815–20); Li (1989); Ren (1990, chap. 1).

21. See Welch (1957, part 3) for an introduction of the development of Daoism in China. Please note that religious Daoism did not originate as an ideology inimical to Confucian teachings. In fact, mainstream religious Daoism texts have all adopted Confucian moral code as their ethical principles (Ren 1990, pp. 14–15).

22. Buddhism is first mentioned in a Chinese text of 65 CE (Zürcher 1959, pp. 18–27).

23. Du (1991, pp. 172–75); Zürcher (1959, pp. 95–102).

reunified by the military forces of the north and the changing fate of Buddhism there was crucial to China's reunification under a Confucian-Legalist state.

The nomadic tribes and tribal confederations mostly migrated into China during and after the Eastern Han dynasty. Amid the chaos and huge depopulation during the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty, they started to establish their own empires. To maintain their own heritage against the influence of Confucianism, the earlier rulers, such as Shi Le (r. 330–333) of the Later Zhao dynasty (319–350), Fu Jian (r. 357–385) of the Former Qin (351–394), Yao Xing (r. 394–416) of the Later Qin (384–417), Murong De (r. 398–405) of the Southern Yan (398–410), and Juqu Mengxun (r. 401–433) of the Northern Liang (401–439), all actively sponsored Buddhism.²⁴ Shi Hu of the Later Zhao dynasty (r. 334–349), for example, even proclaimed that “Buddha is the nomads’ god,”²⁵ appointed the monk Fotu Cheng (d. 348) as the state councillor,²⁶ and promulgated various policies to promote Buddhism. Buddhist monasteries, especially the big ones, received gifts of land (and allotments of local families to work it), funds, and servants.²⁷ Monasteries were also largely exempted from taxation.²⁸

Though the lifespan of these dynasties were brief, together they fostered a quick spread of Buddhism. During the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), founded by the Tuoba tribe of the Xianbei people, it was recorded that northern China had a total of forty-seven grand state monasteries, 839 large monasteries constructed by eminent members of the royal or great families, and more than 30,000 monasteries built by commoners.²⁹ It was recorded that three million monks of the Northern Qi dynasty (550–577)—more than ten percent of the population of northern China—“were defrocked after the conquest of that state by the Northern Zhou in 577.”³⁰ Over time, the nomadic rulers of northern China, having initially sponsored Buddhism, increasingly came to see its success as a problem for the following reasons:

First, Buddhists at the time cleaved to the belief that “their lives were to be regulated by monastic law, not by secular codes; hence they were not required to pay homage to their rulers.”³¹ This made Buddhism a less appealing ideology—certainly a less appealing political ideology—in the eyes of the rulers, who by the fourth century were coming to terms with Confucianism and Daoism.³² Second, in

24. Du (1991, pp. 159–60).

25. He (1995, p. 396); Fairbank and Goldman (2006, p. 75).

26. Demiéville (1986, p. 847).

27. Gernet (1995, p. 4).

28. Gernet (1995, chap. 2).

29. Gernet (1995, p. 40).

30. Dien (2007, p. 387).

31. Chên (1973, p. 77). Hui Yuan (334–416), a famous monk, argued forcefully that “since he does not seek to benefit from the arrangements maintained by secular authority, he should not be obliged to pay homage to the reigning prince” (Wright 1967, p. 50).

32. Daoism “allowed the emperor, the Son of Heaven, to play his part as intermediary between heaven and man against a far more impressive background than that envisaged in the system of imperial Confucian ideology

Buddhism the ultimate aspiration of the believer is nirvana, whose attainment depends in part on leaving family and society.³³ Such a value was anathema to Confucian-minded people, to whom filial piety and social responsibility were principal virtues. Third, construction of large monasteries and sculptured caves required huge amounts of manpower and resources. By diminishing agricultural production and depleting crucial resources,³⁴ Buddhism could not help but be a worry to the state.³⁵ Fourth, because the property of monasteries and temples was largely exempt from taxation, many people turned over their lands to monasteries and became monks or monastery dependents, thereby dodging state taxes. And monasteries came to accumulate more wealth by virtue of their increased land holdings and labor forces for agricultural production, commercial activities, and usury, greatly weakening the states' revenues.³⁶ Finally, the structure of religious organizations always reflects the secular political order. Organizational structures of the Buddhist monasteries during the Age of Disunion became increasingly hierarchical and coercive (mirroring the nature of the secular rule), compelling lower-ranking monks to rebel against temple authorities. Though these outbreaks were not directed against the state, the turmoil threatened a regime's stability.³⁷

These problems made Buddhism a frequent and easy target for Daoists and Confucians. By mid-sixth century, the rulers of both Northern Qi (550–577) and Northern Zhou (557–580) had begun to persecute Buddhists.³⁸ Although neither attempt at suppression was very successful, they did manage to curtail Buddhism's relationship with the state and accelerate its transformation into an indigenous religion of China.³⁹ Clearly, by the late sixth century, rulers whose cultural heritage was still that of the northern steppe were disenchanted with the utility of Buddhism to their rule and were rediscovering the value of Confucianism as a ruling ideology.

Even at the start of the Age of Disunion, most nomadic or semi-nomadic rulers, while promoting Buddhism, continued to actively sponsor Confucian learning and attempted to model their governments after the Chinese. Liu Yuan, the founding emperor of the Former Zhao dynasty (304–384), had received sound Confucian training, and appointed many Confucian scholars to important positions in his court. Murong Huang, the founding emperor of the Former Yan dynasty (337–370), was

evolved under the Han dynasty." It was attractive to self-aggrandizing rulers in ways that Buddhism was not (Barrett 1996, p. 17). This is not to say that Buddhism was intrinsically incapable of being a ruling ideology. In countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka, Theravāda Buddhism has been the basis of state legitimation, and cooperation between the lay rulers and the sangha has proved crucial to the survival of states (Smith 1977; Tambiah 1976). See Reynolds and Ludwig (1980) for an analysis of the transformations of religions in history.

33. Chén (1973, pp. 15–16).

34. For instance, the use of copper to cast Buddhist statues caused serious copper shortages at the time.

35. Gernet (1995, pp. 14–25).

36. He (1995, pp. 397–98).

37. Between 402 and 517, nine such rebellions broke out in northern China (Demiéville 1986, p. 856).

38. Demiéville (1986, pp. 857–58); He (1995, vol. 7, pp. 402–403).

39. Chén (1973).

himself a fine Confucian scholar.⁴⁰ Even Shi Le of the Later Zhao dynasty, who enthusiastically sponsored Buddhism during his reign, established a Confucian academy and promoted Confucian education in the court and in society at large.⁴¹ As the “problems” caused by Buddhism became apparent, rulers of the northern dynasties, including the emperors of Northern Wei (386–534), Northern Qi, and Northern Zhou, all promoted Confucianism and encouraged sinicization.⁴² Among these efforts, the radical reforms implemented by Emperor Xiaowen (whose dynastic title means “filial and cultured”) of Northern Wei doubtless had the most long-lasting impact on the history of China. Among the reforms, Emperor Xiaowen relocated Northern Wei’s capital from Pingcheng (present-day Datong, in the far north of Shanxi province) to Luoyang in the heart of China, in order to sever the empire from its tribal base and foster its embrace of Chinese culture. He promoted Confucian learning, modeled the Northern Wei bureaucracy and legal system after that of the Han dynasty, adopted the rites and etiquette of the Han dynasty as protocol for court proceedings and rituals, and implemented the “equal fields” (*jun tian*) system to promote agricultural production and expand the tax base.⁴³ Emperor Xiaowen also ordered his people to adopt Chinese surnames, the Chinese language, Chinese clothing, and Chinese customs. Finally, Emperor Xiaowen ordered members of the royal family to intermarry with Chinese in order to forge firmer ties with the local elite. The Northern Wei dynasty was the longest-lasting dynasty in northern China during the Age of Disunion; at its zenith it ruled all of northern China.⁴⁴ Emperor Xiaowen’s relentless sinicization of so many aspects of life, including government, paved the way to China’s reunification under the Sui dynasty.

In his seminal book *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, Mark Elvin states, “The restoration of the unity of the Chinese Empire which took place under the new Sui dynasty thus mainly resulted from improvements in organization. A new land system in the north as a whole, and a new military system in the north-west, had placed a greater concentration of resources and power in the hands of the rulers of the state of Western Wei/Northern Chou.”⁴⁵ This statement shows enormous insight. To achieve a stable, unified empire in China, the power of the great families and military overlords had to be undermined, the nomads converted to agriculture and made governable by an agrarian empire, and the state’s organization and resource extraction capacity strengthened. All of this was achieved slowly, as the incessant wars of the Age of Disunion greatly favored state power.

40. He (1995, pp. 426–30).

41. He (1995, p. 209).

42. Tanigawa (2004).

43. The “equal fields” system created by Emperor Xiaowen was frequently employed by later rulers to combat land concentration.

44. For more details on Emperor Xiaowen’s reform, see Lu (1979); Sun (2005); Zhou (2001).

45. Elvin (1973, p. 53).

But one must not forget that ideological forces also played a significant part in China's reunification. The resurgence of Confucianism undermined the influence of state-weakening Buddhism on politics, and induced in society a mind-set more amenable to government by a strong state. Moreover, the adoption of Confucian-Legalist institutions and culture by the nomadic and semi-nomadic rulers gave these rulers and their subjects a "Chinese" identity, kindling their ambition to be known as the unifiers of China.⁴⁶

CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

One of Michael Mann's contributions to historical sociology is his identification of the military as a source of social power that is different from political power.⁴⁷ Not to say in the premodern world, even in the modern state, military actors independent or semi-independent of the state still linger on as militia, security forces, private armies, pirates, or bandits. These rather insignificant military establishments could easily rise and swell in a time of state breakdown. Moreover, in modern nation-states, armies can escape state control by inducing a military crisis, backing certain political leaders, or staging a coup d'état.⁴⁸ But Mann neglects the fact that political power tends to prevail over the other ideal-typical power sources. As explained in chapter 1, both political and military power are centralized and coercive in nature, but political power has a performance-based legitimacy that military power lacks, which gives political actors certain advantages in their competition with military actors.

In a given society, however, and at given times, other conditions also work to shape the relationship between the political and military powers. In China, the relationship between political and military actors varied greatly both between dynasties and within the same dynasty. Most significantly, between the end of the Eastern Han dynasty in 220 and the founding of the Northern Song dynasty in 960, except for a period between the founding of the Tang dynasty in 618 and the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion in 755, the private armies of warlords and of the great families dominated politics, and the survival of state rulers was at the mercy of military strongmen. It was not until the early Northern Song dynasty that a full-fledged Confucian-Legalist state was restored, in which generals were subjected to much tighter control by the civilian government than in the Han and Tang dynasties. This section relates how the Chinese state gained

46. The drive for unification was particularly strong, and particularly effective, in northern China for two reasons. First, southern China was ruled by a single state most of the time, whereas northern China was divided by competing states. Their military competition produced more capable governments and stronger armies. Second, the armies of the northern states inherited some of the nomadic military traditions, particularly potent cavalry arms, with which the infantry of southern armies could not compete.

47. Mann (1986, 1993).

48. Finer (1988).

increasingly better control of its military over time and the ways in which Confucianism and the Confucian-Legalist political system contributed to the marginalization of military power in China.

As we saw in chapter 9, for most of its existence the Han dynasty was administered by Confucian-minded bureaucrats, and generals enjoyed only a secondary authority. Amid waves of rebellion during the late Eastern Han dynasty, however, regional civilian governors started to raise their own armies. In addition, both the central state and the regional government employed mercenaries recruited from the northern tribes, and the great families and local strongmen built fortresses and turned their dependents into private armies (*buqu bing*). This centrifugal tendency of the military, out from under state control, had contributed to the collapse of the Eastern Han dynasty and the chaos during the Age of Disunion.

The Age of Disunion was a time of military domination (as well as of ideological realignment). Wars had always been a driving force in the creation and recreation of Chinese dynasties, but generally, once a new dynasty had established itself, the imperial succession was stabilized in ways regarded as legitimate by the new royal house and the bureaucracy. The Age of Disunion was a significant exception to this rule. Between 220 and 581, military men were the ultimate arbiters of dynastic succession,⁴⁹ and so-called emperors or kings were frequently puppets of powerful warlords.⁵⁰ Most dynasties lasted only a very short time,⁵¹ and ended more often by a coup d'état than by foreign invasion or rebellion. The Han dynasty political model—that is, a state governed by a civilian bureaucracy, was destroyed.

Yet throughout the entire Age of Disunion the Han ideal of civilian rule never vanished. Even the northern states, ruled by nomads and semi-nomads, eventually aimed to develop civilian governments similar to the Han ideal. In both northern and southern China, once a new dynasty had been proclaimed, the founding ruler was strongly inclined to use Confucianism to buttress its legitimacy and to promote civilian rule for the sake of its stability.⁵² Early in the Age of Disunion no ruler was able to realize his goals, prevented by strongmen who emerged during a sequence of political crises in the late Eastern Han dynasty and after.⁵³ Cao Cao and his son Cao Pi (r. 220–226) of the Wei dynasty (220–265) tried hard to break the political dominance of the great families who controlled private armies, but they failed and Wei collapsed. Wei's demise was understood at the time to result from

49. Graff (2002a, chaps. 2–5).

50. During this period hegemonic generals often had their own administrations (*bafu*), away from the capital, with de facto control of the country. This practice, initiated by Cao Cao (155–220), continued throughout the Age of Disunion (Tao 2007).

51. The Former Liang (314–376), the longest-surviving dynasty of the Sixteen States, only lasted 63 years. The other fifteen states only lasted between 10 and 40 years.

52. Graff (2002a, chaps. 3–4).

53. The crises included the Yellow Turban Rebellion, wars among the warlords following the rebellion, and the War of Eight Princes.

the political and military weakness of the emperor's kinsmen, who lent the royal house no help when it was challenged by the great families. Hoping to avoid this end, Sima Yan (Emperor Wu) of the Western Jin dynasty (265–316) created many kingdoms over which he set up his kinsmen as rulers. But as had befallen the Eastern Zhou and early Western Han dynasties, these kinsmen, in 290, took advantage of their appanages to rebel against the center, triggering the famous War of Eight Princes and putting an end to the Western Jin dynasty. Thereafter, southern China was ruled successively by five Chinese émigré dynasties, and northern China mostly by rulers of northern steppe origin. Rulers in both regions never stopped trying to control the holders of military power. Mechanisms aimed at weakening the great families and strongmen were repeatedly introduced, and ideals of civilian government were promoted even by warlords-turned-emperor. Since the history of the northern states is complicated by more frequent dynastic turnovers, and further complicated by conflict or comingling between the Chinese and nomad populations, let us consider the simpler southern dynasties to illustrate how warlords-turned-emperor tried to control the military.

The southern dynasties were successively ruled by five empires: Eastern Jin (317–420), (Liu) Song (420–479), Southern Qi (479–502), Liang (502–557), and Chen (557–589). Liu Yu, the founding emperor of the Liu Song dynasty, was of humble origin; he rose through Eastern Jin army ranks on his military abilities. During the Sun En and Lu Xun Rebellion the army of Xie Yan (head of the powerful Xie family) was defeated and Xie was killed, which allowed Liu Yu to take the lead in suppressing the rebellion. After the rebellion was suppressed, Liu Yu led his army north, conquered the northern states Southern Yan (398–410) and Later Qin (384–417), and extended Eastern Jin's territory into the heart of northern China. His power and fame were then unrivaled. In 420 Liu Yu forced Emperor Gong of Eastern Jin to abdicate his throne and established the Liu Song dynasty. Liu (Emperor Wu) and his son (Emperor Wen) adopted several measures to check the power of their generals. By promoting people of humble origins to high-level court and army positions, they hoped to counter the power of the great families. They also appointed young princes and other close relatives to important military posts, and sent "secretaries" (*dian qian*) to keep an eye on the regional military commanders. Their measures brought successes and also fresh problems.⁵⁴ In the end, they could not prevent a capable general from usurping the throne.

This pattern was repeated again and again. The last three of the five southern dynasties (i.e., Southern Qi, Liang, and Chen) were all established by warlords who gained power and prestige through military successes. Moreover, once the warlords-turned-emperor had the throne, they all tried hard to control their

54. Zhao et al. (1987, pp. 185–86).

ambitious military men. The Southern Qi rulers, for instance, copied the measures adopted by the Liu Song dynasty and further strengthened the “secretaries” system. In addition, they prohibited regional civilian officers from controlling the army and the generals from expanding army forces under their control.⁵⁵ None of these measures worked particularly well, as is shown by the brevity of the four dynasties that followed Eastern Jin. Nevertheless, as emperors of later dynasties learned increasingly more lessons from earlier unsuccessful measures, their capacity to control the military also slowly gained.

During the Age of Disunion, the state’s increasing capacity to harness military power was also facilitated by the following two clusters of factors: First, frequent interstate wars advantaged the states at the expense of the great families and local warlords. In both northern and southern China no great families or local warlords were able to sustain wars requiring tens of thousands of soldiers over a long period. They were forced to concede control of their military and of their local administration to the emerging central government.⁵⁶ War also favored capable generals over generals of high social status (recall how Liu Yu had risen to the top from his humble origin). Even so, in both northern and southern China the social status of the great families endured to the mid-Tang dynasty or even later. Second, the resumption of civilian government was also facilitated by the resurgence of Confucianism in northern China, including the sponsorship of Confucianism by rulers whose social heritage was northern and tribal. Confucianism abetted remarginalization of military power under the unified Tang dynasty.

The Tang dynasty, which ended three-and-a-half centuries of disunion, ushered in a prolonged period of prosperity. During the early to mid-Tang dynasty, government was civilian and followed Han dynasty ideals, and Tang’s immense military power remained at the service of the central government.⁵⁷ Among various changes implemented by early rulers of the Tang dynasty, apart from their control of the military, two institutional developments particularly contributed to Tang’s success: the civil-service examinations and the development of the regional headquarters system (*fubing zhi*).

The civil-service examination for recruiting civilian officials had been pioneered late in the Age of Disunion and Sui dynasty, and was immediately adopted by the new Tang dynasty rulers.⁵⁸ It endured from the early seventh century until its abolition in 1905 and was one of the most consequential Confucian-Legalist institutions of premodern China. It upheld Confucianism by virtue of the

55. Zhang (2002, p. 167).

56. Chen (1998).

57. The Tang dynasty’s central administration consisted of three departments (the Secretariat, the Chancellery, and the Department of State Affairs) and six ministries (Personnel, Revenue, Rites, Military Affairs, Justice, and Work), all run by civilian officials. The system developed out of the “Three Excellencies and Nine Ministers” of the Qin and Han dynasties and was officially instituted in the Sui dynasty.

58. Shi (1995, pp. 874–76).

Confucian canon being an important component of the examinations from the very beginning, and by the Ming dynasty, mastering Neo-Confucian orthodoxy became crucial to examination success. Being rule-driven and instrumental, it was also Legalist in its use of competitive examinations to select officials. As employed during the Tang dynasty, it undercut the power of great families that had existed since the Eastern Han dynasty; it helped the state to prevent the reemergence of an aristocracy in society. Its principal function, of course, was to recruit competent civilians into the bureaucracy, which in turn reinforced civilian rule. Since emperors increasingly participated in the grading of the essays and in the placement of successful candidates in appropriate offices, the examinations also enhanced the personal loyalty of successful candidates to the emperor. Finally, since successful candidates came from different regions and different backgrounds, the resulting bureaucracy was hardly likely to form a single interest group in opposition to the state. In short, the civil-service examination reinforced civilian rule and the personal loyalty of civilian officials to the state and emperor, and militated against the formation of cliques in government.

Regarding the military institutions, the early Tang had not only learned from the past but also further developed the regional headquarters system, which had gone into effect during the Western Wei dynasty (535–557). Prior to the regional headquarters system, northern China had been dominated by hereditary professional soldiers (*shibing*) of nomadic or semi-nomadic origins. Ethnic Chinese of that time were mostly farmers, though a substantial number joined the private armies of local strongmen, who were mostly also ethnic Chinese. In 543 Commander Yuwen Tai (507–556) of the Western Wei lost 60,000 of his Xianbei soldiers in a major battle.⁵⁹ Compelled by circumstances, Yuwen started to enlist ethnic Chinese and to appoint leading local strongmen to command his armies. Later, to supply increasing demand, Yuwen proceeded to enlist soldiers from among all the ethnic Chinese who had benefited from the equal field system (*juntian zhi*) implemented during the Northern Wei dynasty.⁶⁰ The new armies were organized by region, each region was responsible to its own headquarters; hence, the name “regional headquarters.” Under this system, land was distributed according to the equal field system and largely exempt from taxation. The recipients were required, in return, to accept military training and to provide military service for a certain period of each year. During the Age of Disunion, armies were made up of hereditary professional soldiers. Soldiers of the regional armies, recruited from among the peasants, earned their livings by farming, and their military status was not hereditary.

59. Li (1995, pp. 758–59).

60. During the Tang dynasty, under the regional headquarters system each adult male was, in theory, provided with 100 *mu* of land, more than enough to support an average family (Graff 2002a, p. 208). This equal field system, an invention of the Northern Wei dynasty, was frequently implemented by later dynasties.

The regional headquarters system linked military duties with economic rewards, raised the common soldier's social status, and greatly expanded the supply of soldiers in time of war.⁶¹ It also helped the state to absorb the private armies of the great families and local strongmen into the state military. The regional headquarters system was implemented and improved during the Later Zhou (557–581) and Sui (581–618) dynasties. By the early Tang dynasty, when the system had matured, China had 634 regional headquarters, mostly located along the Yellow River and Taihang Mountains axis.⁶² Also during the Tang dynasty, a few other regulations were added to the regional headquarters system, to prevent generals from turning their commands into personal armies. Generals were rotated among the regional headquarters to weaken any personal ties that might develop between generals and the troops. Regional headquarters armies could not be deployed without tallies from the capital. When the troops were mobilized for war, soldiers of various regional headquarters were mingled in an "expeditionary army" led by an ad hoc appointed general who would return to the capital when the war was over.⁶³ When an expeditionary army was on campaign, the emperor would also appoint trusted persons as supervisors (*jianjun*) to monitor the army commanders.⁶⁴

The regional headquarters system, however, collapsed by the early eighth century, roughly 200 years after its inception. Historians more or less agree on the causes of the collapse:⁶⁵ The prolonged peace and prosperity of the early Tang dynasty generated a large population increase; the state no longer had enough land to distribute among the regional soldiers. Further aggravating this problem were the increasing corruption and incompetence of local officials, which precluded the effective implementation of laws and regulations that supported the system; for example, although it was illegal to buy or sell land distributed under the equal field system, such land was increasingly being appropriated by officials and the rich, compelling the now landless farmers to migrate. Moreover, as the empire achieved internal peace, and most wars were being fought only on the Central Asian frontiers, traveling to and from one's post could take months, and periods of duty were longer, which inevitably disrupted farming. Fighting and farming could no longer be combined. The importance of the regional headquarters was thus diminished, the status of farmer-soldiers declined, and a professional army came into being once more.⁶⁶

61. According to Elvin (1973, pp. 60–61), and seconded by most historians, the equal field system "specified the amounts of land to which the holders of civil and military ranks were entitled, . . . mak[ing] service in the state bureaucracy and the divisional militia the general aspiration of the well-to-do." Scholars of Elvin's generation tend to translate the Chinese term *fubing* as "divisional militia" to emphasize its nonprofessional nature.

62. Shi (1995, p. 990).

63. Graff (2002a, pp. 191–92).

64. Liu (1992, pp. 240–41).

65. Elvin (1973, pp. 61–68); Shi (1995, pp. 995–1001).

66. After 674 soldiers of the regional headquarters were no longer granted land exempt from taxation. And records state that, by the late seventh century people ran away in large numbers or even mutilated themselves to avoid being recruited into the regional headquarters (Elvin 1973, p. 65).

Small frontier contingents, manned by mercenaries and conscripts and led by permanent commanders, existed at the very beginning of the Tang dynasty. The declining importance of the regional headquarters system and the need for permanent garrisons to ward off the threat from Tibetans and other peoples led to a great expansion of the frontier armies. During the reign of Emperor Rui (r. 684–690), ten military governors were appointed.⁶⁷ Initially, military governors only took charge of local military affairs, and they were replaced regularly. By the early eighth century, as the size of and need for the frontier armies grew, military governors extended their charge to local administration and taxation, and their positions became *de facto* permanent.⁶⁸ The great autonomy that the frontier military governors had acquired led to a growing centrifugal tendency among the military. That tendency contributed to the An Lushan Rebellion of 755.⁶⁹

It took eight years to suppress the rebellion, but even so, the centrifugal tendency among the military, which had contributed to the rebellion, only intensified. In order to suppress the rebellion, armies of the loyal military governors had to be greatly strengthened and new military governors' headquarters established in China's heartland. Although the Tang dynasty lingered on into the beginning of the tenth century, the rebellion was followed by Tibetan invasions, eunuchs' challenging bureaucrats for control of the court, and most seriously, rebellions of peasants and powerful military governors.⁷⁰ In 907 Zhu Wen (ca. 852–912), the military governor of Bianzhou (Kaifeng), took Emperor Ai of Tang (r. 904–907) into custody and established the Liang dynasty. Other military governors immediately followed suit, and China was once again plunged into a Hobbesian world. The following half century of chaos, known in China as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, somewhat resembled the Age of Disunion: the Khitan people of Manchuria occupied a large part of northeastern China and established the Liao dynasty, the military was controlled by generals, and coups d'état and usurpations became the norms of power transfer. This period, however, differed from the Age of Disunion in three important ways. First, Confucian ideals were not in any significant way undermined and the civil-service examination continued in the major states. Second, a large repertoire of checks-and-balances mechanisms, aimed at curbing the military, had been developed over the past centuries and was available to capable rulers. Third, now that two long-lasting unified empires (Han and Tang) existed as ideals in Chinese memory, the goal of capable warlords was to establish yet another unified *ecumene*. Together, these conditions greatly expedited China's process of reunification and the return of civilian rule.

67. Shi (1995, p. 396).

68. Graff (2002a, p. 216).

69. An Lushan was military governor of the Fanyang region (around present-day Beijing). See Pulleyblank (1955) for an account of the rebellion.

70. Of the numerous rebellions, the one led by the salt merchant Huang Chao between 875 and 884 was the most devastating to the Tang dynasty.

Almost all the warlords-turned-emperor and king in this period tried to implement civilian rule and check the military as soon as they came to power. The earlier attempts were all without major success, but as internecine warfare generated bigger states and more visionary commanders, unifying China and checking rogue armies became possible.⁷¹ Both goals were accomplished by Zhao Kuangyin, posthumously known as Emperor Taizu (r. 960–976). Zhao was an army commander of the Later Zhou dynasty (951–960).⁷² In 960 he was dispatched to confront a supposed Khitan invasion, but as the army marched north his generals are reported to have forced the throne upon him, declaring their allegiance yet again in the Later Zhou capital, Kaifeng. How much of this account is true cannot be verified. It is verifiable, though, that it was a bloodless usurpation. The (Northern) Song dynasty that Zhao founded lasted until the Jurchen invasion in 1127. During his reign, Emperor Taizu defeated the competing warlords and conquered most of the rival states except for the Khitan Liao dynasty.⁷³ Taizu did, however, place China's military firmly under the control of his newly established empire.⁷⁴

Emperor Taizu first arranged comfortable retirement for the powerful generals who had urged him to take the throne, famously known in Chinese history as “dissolving military power over a cup of wine.” Taizu also abolished several powerful commands and restructured the imperial guard into three branches, each led by a low-ranking officer who was commissioned only to care for his soldiers' mundane needs. The deployment of the imperial guard was now controlled by civilian officials; only in the case of a military conflict would the court appoint an ad hoc commander over the imperial guard. Having reorganized the imperial guard, Taizu worked to undermine the power and authority of the military governors, which had been a root cause of the warlordism prevailing since the An Lushan Rebellion: He first ordered all the military governors to send their best soldiers to the capital to join the imperial guard units. After weakening the military governors militarily, he relieved them of their authority over finances and taxation, summoned them to the capital, and handed their control of local administration to civilian officials. The once mighty military governors were left with an honorific title.

71. Wang (1963, chaps. 4–7).

72. There were two Later Zhou dynasties in Chinese history. The earlier one was established in the sixth century.

73. The Song army was badly defeated by Liao in the famous battle of Gaoliang River in 979. Thereafter, the two states fought frequently and Liao won the majority of the clashes, largely thanks to its more mobile cavalry. In 1005 Song and Liao concluded the Treaty of Chanyuan on terms favorable to Liao but bringing prolonged and much-needed peace to Song (Z. Chen 1995, pp. 235–40; Lau 2000). The Song dynasty was unable to reconquer a large part of traditionally Chinese territory in the north, and therefore perhaps cannot be said to have really “unified” China. See Tsang (2003, 2006) for more recent analyses of the Northern Song military culture and of its defeats by the forces of the Liao and Xixia dynasties.

74. Wang (1963).

More importantly, the Song dynasty founders further strengthened the civil-service examination and promoted state control over the military by ideological means. For example, it is recorded that Emperor Taizong (r. 976–997), brother and heir of Taizu, met with every candidate who had passed the examination so as to cultivate personal ties within the bureaucracy.⁷⁵ He also produced a book entitled *When Culture is Illustrious, Governance Transforms*. For the civil-service examinations Taizong elected essay topics, such as “*Wen* or *Wu* (Culture or Arms), which is more necessary to society?” or “Contemplate the *wen* of man to transform all under heaven”—all intended to promote a Confucianized civilian culture.⁷⁶ Through the efforts of the early Song rulers, civilians once again governed China.⁷⁷

Ever since the Northern Song dynasty, other Chinese dynasties have risen and fallen, each managing its military forces in its own way, but each maintaining civilian government as the norm. This is not to say that in the later dynasties the central government controlled all means of violence. Where the state’s power could not reach, as in remote villages, mountainous regions, and frontiers, bandits and local militias of various sorts operated more or less freely. These kinds of forces always expanded greatly as the dynasty declined and rebellions arose, and their expansion always contributed to the dynasty’s ultimate breakdown.⁷⁸ But centrifugal tendencies in the state’s army were never again as serious a problem as they had been. After the Northern Song dynasty, even though war and violence always attended dynastic transitions, the interregnums between dynasties were very brief. Prolonged warlordism, as occurred in the Age of Disunion, the late Tang dynasty, and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, never reappeared.

China was able to achieve a culture of civilian rule at such an early time largely because the alliance between the state and the Confucian elite left military men with few legitimate positions in politics. The above account also shows that once a compelling Confucian-Legalist political model existed, even when a military commander declared himself (or was declared) emperor (for example, in the founding of the Song dynasty), the general-turned-emperor needed quickly to adopt that model as state ideology and to seek the cooperation of Confucian scholars and scholar-officials. Hence even at the start of a dynasty the generals still had no normative political power. Moreover, if the military got out of hand in one dynasty, the rulers of the succeeding dynasty would be on guard.⁷⁹ Over time, civilian rule became not only dominant but unquestionable.

75. Lorge (2005, p. 33).

76. Bol (1992, p. 151).

77. The installation of civilian rule only limited the generals’ political power; it did not, as some scholars have argued, create an antimilitary culture or embed civilian-military opposition in Chinese mentality. Many Chinese civilian officials were closely involved in and good at military matters, and many high army officers excelled at civilian cultural activities (Ryor 2009; Wyatt 2009).

78. See K. Huang (2002) for militias and private armies during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279); Rowe (2007) for a history of violence in a particular county, and Kuhn (1970) for a classic analysis of the dialectic development of rebellions and local militias during the Qing dynasty.

79. Kuhn (2009, p. 2).

China was unified and disintegrated repeatedly, and by different agencies. Yet behind these differing causes lay a general affinitive relationship—China was unified when the Confucian elite dominated politics, and fell apart when military strongmen were able to seize control. Since the beginning of the Northern Song dynasty, warlords and army officers alike were unable to do that, except briefly during dynastic transitions. Accordingly, China was almost continuously unified for almost a millennium.

SUMMARY

The Age of Disunion was a time of ideological realignment and dominance by various military leaders, during which the Confucian-Legalist state model and the norm of civilian rule were both greatly weakened. Between the third and sixth centuries CE, many small states divided China; nomadic and semi-nomadic states ruled throughout northern China, Buddhism achieved great influence in both the state and society, and warlords and generals dominated politics in a slew of small and mutually hostile states. Yet China did not remain divided, as did Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Instead, Buddhism was sinicized and its influence in Chinese politics marginalized, the originally nomadic elites adopted Chinese culture and identity, and China eventually was reunified under the Tang dynasty. Moreover, by the Song dynasty, civilian rule existed not just as an ideology, but also as a framework of concrete institutions that were sustained by the civil-service examination system and the various check-and-balance mechanisms cumulatively developed by former Chinese rulers. Many occurrences and recurrences had contributed to China's reunification and associated cultural developments, but Confucianism as an ideology and Confucian-minded scholars as political actors were the key. China's rulers, regardless of their ethnic origins, perceived Confucianism as a more useful ruling ideology than Buddhism. They also perceived civilian administration as conducive to this continued rule. These were the key logics behind the historical development outlined in this chapter, and the key facilitators of a full-fledged Confucian-Legalist state and a "Confucian society" during the Song dynasty (chapter 12).

Relations between Nomads and Settled Chinese in History

Nomads and semi-nomads still exerted great influence in Chinese history following the Age of Disunion. They deployed enormous pressure against China's frontiers during early Tang and mid- to late-Ming dynasties. During the Song dynasty, northern China was ruled by several empires of nomadic or semi-nomadic origin. Most significantly, both the Yuan (1279–1368) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties had been nomadic (Yuan) or semi-nomadic (Qing) before they conquered China.¹ This chapter analyzes the patterns of nomad-settled Chinese relations and their impact on the Confucian-Legalist state. It presents evidence that although dynasties of nomadic or semi-nomadic origins introduced many new elements into Chinese culture and history, they did not fundamentally alter China's Confucian-Legalist political structure, and it proposes a general theory that attempts to comprehend the pattern of nomad-settled Chinese relations over the past millennia. In touching on the geopolitical dimension of political power, this theory somewhat transcends the central themes of this book, but it supports the notion that the Confucian-Legalist political system was highly resilient.

NOMADS AND THE CONFUCIAN-LEGALIST STATE

Throughout Chinese history nomadic or semi-nomadic conquerors could choose whether or not to adopt the Confucian-Legalist political system. But this represented a dilemma, abjuring that system meant forgoing cooperation from Confucian scholars and Confucian-minded local elites, and thus losing the opportunity to buttress their rule through an ideology that supported state power. But adopting the Confucian-Legalist system inevitably led to assimilation and the gradual weakening of tribal identity. Without doubt, preserving and promoting ethnic and tribal culture and identity was at first an important concern of the nomads or semi-nomads who conquered China. Over time, however, the successors of the conquerors came to enjoy the sedentary and usually opulent life of an emperor of China. They also became more concerned with

1. See Barfield (1989) for an overview on the dominance of nomadic empires in China.

keeping their thrones than with preserving their own cultures and identities.² To lessen the resistance from the general Chinese population and to invite cooperation from the elites, the nomadic and semi-nomadic rulers, having conquered China, all to some extent endorsed the model of the Confucian-Legalist state.³ Some, such as Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei (r. 471–499), discussed in the last chapter, even went so far as to compel his own people to assimilate, adopting Chinese norms and customs, and even intermarrying with the Chinese people. Repeated nomadic domination of China in the end only demonstrated the resilience of the Confucian-Legalist political system.

Yuan and Qing rulers approached the choice and tackled the attendant problems differently. The former limited the operation of Confucianism in politics and administration, the other embraced it; the outcomes, as might be expected, were very different. The Mongols of the Yuan dynasty had had relatively little contact with China before they drove the Jin from northern China and went onto conquer the Southern Song dynasty. Moreover, before invading China, the Mongol forces had already subdued Asia Minor, the Middle East, and part of Eastern Europe, which allowed the Mongols to bring the elites of those regions to China as their officials and administrators. The availability of these underlings freed the Mongols from overreliance on the Confucian elite. Officials of the Yuan dynasty were mostly either non-Chinese or Chinese whom they had promoted from the lower clerical ranks. Offices under the Yuan dynasty were frequently sold.⁴ The civil-service examination, which had been implemented since the beginning of the Sui dynasty, was discontinued for many years and never fully resumed.⁵ The political opportunities of the Confucian scholars were choked off, provoking widespread resentment.

The Mongols divided their subjects into four caste-like groups whose status, from high to low, followed the temporal order of their conquest: Mongols, Caucasians, northern Chinese, and southern Chinese. People in the lower “castes” suffered serious discrimination in daily life, from political opportunities to legal treatment.⁶ Finally, having conquered China, instead of redistributing land abandoned during the fighting to the peasants (as many founders of new dynasties

2. Nomadic rulers of other parts of Eurasia also made great efforts to become indigenized in order to minimize the resistance of the conquered population (Grousset 1990).

3. See, for example, D. Chan (1984) for an account of the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) rulers’ prompt adoption of Chinese-style government and legitimation tools at the expense of their native traditions.

4. D. Chen (1995, p. 436).

5. The civil-service examination was discontinued for over seventy years in northern China. Even after the examination was resumed in 1315, it was implemented only on and off and on a very small scale. Between 1315 and 1333, only a total of 100 *jinshi* degrees were conferred, and the examinations were discontinued after 1333. This practically ruled out any hope for Confucian scholars to achieve success through examinations (D. Chen 1995, pp. 435–36, S. Li 2004, pp. 126–32, Wilson 1995, pp. 47–51).

6. For instance, under Mongol rule the Chinese were not even allowed to raise dogs or birds or to hold many types of public gatherings.

had done), the Yuan granted these lands to their own people. Concentration of land into fewer and fewer hands was a serious problem immediately after the founding of the Yuan dynasty. In the end, although Khubilai (r. 1260–1294), the founding emperor dynasty and a very able ruler, strove to create a lasting empire, rebellions never ceased throughout the Yuan dynasty. Soon after Khubilai's death in 1294, the empire declined, brought down by peasant rebellions in 1368, after only eighty-nine years of existence, making it the third shortest-lived major dynasty in Chinese history.

Unlike the Mongols, the Manchus had not conquered other major civilizations before they invaded China. They therefore were not able to rely on non-Chinese elite to administer China as the Mongols had done. Moreover, the Qing dynasty was forming at the time when the Ming dynasty was experiencing a rapid decline. Even before the Manchu conquest of China, some learned Chinese had already left China to serve as advisers to the Manchu rulers.⁷ Finally, the Manchus were not nearly as formidable militarily as the Mongols. They had succeeded in conquering China largely because the Ming dynasty had just been toppled by peasant rebellions and some of the best Ming armies had defected to their side. These disadvantages, however, became a blessing for the Qing empire because the Manchu rulers were forced to improvise policies that not only placed the tribal banners under imperial control but also won the cooperation of the Ming military and the Confucian scholars. Immediately after the conquest the Manchus adopted the Confucian-Legalist state system in Ming territory. The civil-service examination was quickly restored, and administration in traditional Ming territory resumed a structure greatly resembling the Ming bureaucracy.⁸ These measures diminished the antipathy of the Confucian elite and stabilized the Qing state soon after its inauguration.⁹ It was largely due to the Manchu rulers' decisiveness in adopting the Confucian-Legalist state system that the dynasty lasted 267 years, until the 1911 Republican Revolution.

The Qing dynasty was unique even compared to other dynasties of nomadic or semi-nomadic origin. Like the latter, the Manchus were both aggressive and skillful at securing and expanding their frontiers.¹⁰ They divided a large part of Mongolia into different kinds of banner organizations,¹¹ and pursued a great

7. See Michael (1965) for an account of Chinese advisers helping the Manchus to adopt the Chinese-style administrative system and ideology even before their conquest of China.

8. Countless Ming officials were retained. All that was asked of them was to change their allegiance to the new ruler (Zhou and Sun 1995, pp. 135–41).

9. See Wakeman (1985) for a masterly account of how the Manchus conquered China and stabilized their rule in the seventeenth century. The Manchu elites had vigorously resisted assimilation, particularly during the Oboi Regency (1661–1668; Oxnam 1975). Various levels of ethnic tension between the Manchus and Chinese continued throughout the Qing dynasty (Elliott 2001).

10. Barfield (1989, p. 275; Di Cosmo (2009a).

11. First implemented in the eastern part of Mongolia in the early Qing dynasty. With the Qing conquest of Inner Asia the banner organizations were extended to other parts of Mongolia.

peripheral alliance that “encouraged Mongol leaders to see themselves as part of a greater” Qing elite.¹² They also actively pursued the traditional geopolitical rivalry with the Zunghars (1671–1760)—the last of the Mongol steppe empires—and with final, irreversible success.¹³

Knowing that they were an absolute minority in China,¹⁴ the Manchu rulers made a concerted effort to retain their own culture and language, maintain their martial spirit, and protect their ethnic identity. Although these “Manchu ways” delayed the assimilation of the Manchus and the Han Chinese (as Elliott has documented),¹⁵ in the longer run, the efforts proved futile. Assimilation gained momentum during the eighteenth century¹⁶ and further accelerated in the nineteenth. By the twentieth century, the Manchus had lost their language, adopted Chinese-style surnames, and become hardly distinguishable from the rest of the Chinese.

THE DYNAMICS OF NOMAD-CHINESE RELATIONS

It could be argued that the competition between nomad and settled populations was more intense in China than elsewhere in Eurasia. In Europe the nomads had been held within Eastern Europe, from which they repeatedly raided but were unable to penetrate deep into Western Europe. In Asia Minor and beyond, the Turks, also of nomadic origin but bearing with them Islam and Islamic-settled culture, were able to dominate not only militarily but also culturally from the eleventh century until the rise of the West.¹⁷ Only in China do we see a millennia-long seesawing: nomad confederations were sometimes able to dominate militarily but never culturally. If they managed to settle in China, they faced assimilation.¹⁸ The Chinese were able to assimilate the settled nomads and preserve the Confucian-Legalist political system and culture, and at times, they even won wars against the nomads. But until the eighteenth century, most of the time they were unable to advance very deeply into the steppes to eliminate the nomad threat once and for all.¹⁹ This long, seesaw conflict between nomads and Chinese allowed the relationship to develop to its fullest, making for an excellent case

12. Barfield (1989, p. 276).

13. Emphasizing the “traditional” nature of the Manchu-Zunghar conflict distinguishes it from the early modern maritime Western European imperial expansion, happening around the same time.

14. It is estimated that the total Manchu population at the time of the conquest was only between 206,000 and 390,000 (Elliott 2001, p. 363); this amounts to 2 percent to 3 percent of the Chinese population.

15. Elliott (2001).

16. Elliott (2001).

17. Anderson (1979, pp. 361–94).

18. Chinese-nomad assimilation was not a one-way street. Historically, the Chinese also adopted many nomadic ways, ranging from language to culture. But since the Chinese were demographically overwhelming and, more importantly, had a political system tempting to the nomad rulers, the assimilation process was never symmetrical.

19. Perdue (2005).

study of interactions between nomads and settled populations throughout history.

At least three types of nomads existed on China's frontiers: the steppe nomads in the north, the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in Manchuria, and the Qiang-Tibetan people in west of China.²⁰ These nomadic populations lived in different ecological conditions, engaged in different modes of production, and entered into very different relations with the settled Chinese. The following discussion will largely focus on the steppe nomads, with Manchuria entering the picture at the end to reveal the unique roles that the people of this region played in the steppe nomad–Chinese geopolitical competition.²¹

Theories of nomad-Chinese relations have developed from the early “greedy” to the “needy” and “Chinese world order” theories,²² and, finally, to recent efforts to historicize the changing nomad-Chinese relations in various dynasties.²³ The “greedy” theory has an ancient origin. Ancient Chinese texts depicted the pastoral Rong and Di peoples and the Xiongnu nomads as greedy, cruel, and untrustworthy.²⁴ Modern adherents of the greedy theory no longer endorse its racist undertone, transforming it instead into a “natural warrior” paradigm.²⁵ This paradigm emphasizes nomads' mobility (as horsemen), toughness (from living in a severe climate), and courage (supporting themselves primarily as hunters). Their propensity for fighting was further augmented by the following three conditions: First, their lands had extremely unstable carrying capacities.²⁶ Yet the amount of land and energy needed to sustain a hunter is many times greater than that required by an agriculturalist.²⁷ Nomads were more likely than agriculturists

20. Wang (2008).

21. The Qiang nomads lived in the western part of China, between the headwaters of two major river systems (the Yellow and Huang Rivers). They herded their livestock in the same region, moving the herds from the lowlands in winter to the highlands in summer. They also practiced agriculture in the valleys. This pattern of vertical movement within the same expanse of land (as opposed to horizontal movement encompassing a large expanse) made it easy for the Chinese empires to hold them at bay. Therefore, except for the Xixia dynasty (1038–1227), which was established by a warlord of Qiang or Xianbei origin, the Qiang people were unable to establish their own empires. See Wang (2008, pp. 101–219) for an excellent overview of the different ecologies and politics of the three major nomadic peoples on ancient China's frontiers. See Barfield (2011, pp. 114–16) for an analysis of nomads' different migratory cycles.

22. The terms “needy” and “greedy” are adopted from Di Cosmo (1994).

23. See Di Cosmo (1994, 1999a, 2001) and Psarras (2004) for nomad-Chinese relations during the Eastern Zhou and Han dynasties. For the same relationships during the Qing dynasty, see Perdue (1998, 2002, 2005; Hostetler (2001; Di Cosmo (1998).

24. See the last section of this chapter for the discussion of intermarriage and alliance between the Rong and Di tribes and their Chinese counterparts. See also Di Cosmo (1999a, p. 949) for the unflattering comments on the Rong and Di people preserved in the ancient China received texts.

25. Hildinger (2001; Kierman and Fairbank 1974; Sinor 1981).

26. The temperature can vary as much as eighty degrees Celsius between winter and summer in the central belt of the steppes (Hildinger 2001).

27. According to Wang (2008, p. 3), in Inner Mongolia today, it takes twenty *mu* of land to raise a sheep, and 300 sheep, or between 6,000 and 8,000 *mu* of land (roughly between 1,000 and 1,300 acres), to maintain a five-member household. Estimates yielded by other nomadic societies are comparable (Barth 1961, chap. 2; Vainshtein 1980, p. 57).

to face food shortages, and were desperate for plunder during a food crisis. Second, nomads could change venues quickly and with little infrastructural support. By contrast a nonnomadic army depended heavily on its supply lines. This asymmetry allowed nomads, when faced with a strong opponent, to retreat, lure the enemy into overextending itself, and then launch a counterattack, a military strategy that was much less available to settled populations.²⁸ Finally, the cost-benefit ratio of war greatly favored the nomads. The nomads' harsher living environments were appealing to few agriculturists. Moreover, as roving populations, the nomads were unable to accumulate much wealth for a settled population to plunder. But once nomad forces pierced through a settled population's defense line, they had at their mercy a comparative treasure trove.²⁹

Nomads and the settled population lived under drastically different environmental/ecological conditions. The respective environmental and ecological conditions not only gave rise to different modes of production and forms of political organization, but also to different competitive advantages. The "natural warrior" paradigm insightfully enumerates a set of mechanisms favoring the nomads in their geopolitical competition with the agriculturists. But it overlooks the mechanisms/factors favoring the latter. This chapter borrows the insights of the "natural warrior" paradigm to analyze the dynamic relations between the steppe nomads and the Chinese. At the same time, it focuses on the advantage that accrues to the settled population in conflicts with the nomads.

It was against the biases of the "greedy" theory that the "needy" and "Chinese world order" theories emerged. Various "needy" theories agree that the nomads, even when assisted by oasis agriculture, were unable to fulfill enough of their essential needs and therefore had to trade with the agriculturists. If the trade flow was interrupted, the nomads attacked.³⁰ The "Chinese world order" theory explains the nomad-Chinese relations from the worldview and practices of Chinese rulers. It holds that Chinese rulers tended to hold a Confucian worldview, that is, to conceive of China's relations with other states as hierarchical, with the Chinese state paramount.³¹ It further holds that while this worldview was often a source of problems to China, in its foreign relations, especially when the Chinese state was weak,³² such a worldview was not

28. This nomad advantage, however, should not be overemphasized. A viable nomadic economy required the nomads to migrate by following certain seasonal-spatial routines. Military-oriented movements, therefore, could disrupt the nomadic mode of production and devastate a nomad population. Moreover, when nomad tribes were forced by the Chinese army to retreat to inhospitable areas, this could also devastate the nomadic economy.

29. To these conditions one must add, from a game theoretic point of view, that nomads had many more innate structural reasons to act opportunistically than did settled populations. Treating the interactions between the nomads and the settled populations as an Axelrodian game (Axelrod 1984), one logically concludes that the immobility of the settled population would compel them to establish long-term relations with their neighbors. Whereas the nomads' high spatial mobility made them less motivated to establish long-term relations with other communities, a structure that would encourage opportunism. See also Olson (2000) for an analysis of the behavior of roving bandits.

30. Jagchid and Symons (1989; Khazanov (1984).

31. Fairbank (1968, p. 2).

32. Fairbank (1942; Levenson 1965; Peyrefitte 1993). Since the 1980s, Chinese liberals have considered the traditional hierarchical Chinese worldview to have been a source of problems in Chinese foreign relations. In 2005,

progressively weakened as had happened to the Roman Empire.³³ In fact, the Chinese worldview and associated world order were thought to have been “progressively strengthened” despite frequent challenges—until the arrival of the West.³⁴

Both theories capture some features of nomad-Chinese relationships, but without being wholly plausible. Trading was no doubt important in nomad-Chinese relations, but it seldom determined the nature of the relations. Although it has been argued that the need for uninterrupted trade with settled populations strongly impelled the emergence of nomadic empires,³⁵ none of the major nomadic or semi-nomadic empires of East Asia—Xiongnu, Mongol, or Qing—arose amid trade conflicts with China.³⁶ The theorists of “need” support their argument by pointing out that major raids on China stopped after Emperor Jing (r. 157–141 BCE) of the Western Han dynasty initiated trade with the Xiongnu.³⁷ Such evidence, however, does not fully support their theory, because Emperor Jing’s trade policy coincided with the rise in Western Han military capacity during his reign. Also, along with Emperor Jing’s trade policies were other terms greatly favoring the Xiongnu, such as giving Han princesses in marriage to Xiongnu rulers (*heq-ing*) and bestowing on them regular gifts.

Behind the early Western Han dynasty’s Xiongnu policy was Xiongnu strength and Western Han weakness. That weakness, resulting from the conflicts of the Qin-Han dynastic transition (chapter 9), was unlikely to continue. As soon as the Western Han achieved full strength during the reign of Emperor Wu, its policy toward nomads immediately turned aggressive. It chased the Xiongnu far from the Chinese borders and established “tribute trade” on its own terms.³⁸ In other words, behind this “trade” was not only nomad “needs” but also a reversal of advantage between the two sides of the Great Wall.

Fairbank’s Chinese world-order theory captures the essence of a worldview that prevailed among the elites of imperial China.³⁹ This ideal-typical Chinese rulers’ perspective on interstate relations, which took shape during the Western Han dynasty, nevertheless contains important features of later imperial China’s diplomatic style.⁴⁰ Although the theory helps to explain the culture of ancient Chinese

Yuan Weishi, a Guangzhou-based professor, published an article in a very popular supplement of the *Chinese Youth Daily*, in which he attributed nineteenth-century European aggression in China largely to the Qing dynasty’s outdated foreign policy. Although similar opinions often appear in China’s scholarly publications, circulating them in a popular newspaper is a different matter: the supplement was forced to close down by the government for three months. When it was reopened in response to international pressure, it carried a lengthy article by a Beijing-based professor criticizing Yuan’s position, but never any rebuttal by Yuan.

33. Brown (1971, p. 125) has made a similar argument.

34. Fairbank (1968, p. 19).

35. Khazanov (1984, p. 234).

36. For conditions and events that generated the Xiongnu empire, see Di Cosmo (1999a).

37. *Grand Historian* (“History of the Xiongnu”; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2904).

38. Yü (1967).

39. Fairbank (1953, 1968).

40. The term “Chinese world order” has been used interchangeably with the term “tribute system” by many of Fairbank’s followers (e.g., Moses 1976; Viraphol 1977; Yü 1967; and occasionally even by Fairbank (1942, 1953)

diplomacy and its successes and failures, it is not very effective in explaining the contention between two peoples. The “Chinese world order” as an ideal type is naturally ahistorical when it is uncritically used to analyze nomad-Chinese relationships. The founding emperors of new dynasties might deviate considerably from the Confucian worldview, invading other states that had adopted Confucian culture and posed no major threat to China.⁴¹ Besides, some Chinese empires of nomadic or semi-nomadic origin never fully adopted the Chinese world order model in dealing with other states.⁴² My explanation of the patterns of nomad-Chinese relations tries to combine recent scholarship with older theories and embed the analysis within historical particularities.⁴³

Keeping in mind the possible biases and overgeneralizations, let us consider that it was the interplay of the following three sets of structural factors and associated mechanisms that shaped nomad-Chinese relations during the last several millennia: climatic/ecological conditions; mentalities of the rulers on both sides; and most importantly, comparative advantages, mutual learning, and mutual assimilation in the context of military conflict. Let us discuss these factors in turn, placing the most emphasis on the last one.

Looking at the dynamics of the nomad-Chinese relations over a *longue durée*, we immediately identify climate conditions as crucial.⁴⁴ Zhu Kezhen, a leading Chinese scientist and educator, has reconstructed China’s climate changes in the past millennia:⁴⁵ (1) a cold period roughly between 1000 and 770 BCE; (2) a long warm period (about 1 to 2 degrees Celsius warmer than average temperatures today) between 770 BCE and 150 CE; (3) a cold period between 150 and 600 CE (1 to 2 degrees Celsius colder than it is today), (4) a warm period between 600 and 1000; and (5) an extended cold period between 1000 and 1900. Two conclusions can be drawn immediately. First, each cold period coincided with influxes of nomads or herders as migrants or invaders. The cold phase between 1000 and 770 BCE coincided with the arrival of the Xianyun, Rong, and Di peoples. The cold phase between 150 and 600 CE corresponded with the migration of nomads into

himself. Although these scholars knew that the essence of the tribute system was not trade but Chinese attitudes and practices in foreign relations, some of them tended to elevate the importance of tribute trade in the tribute system at the expense of its other, more crucial, aspects. The essence of the tribute system was not tribute trade but rather the ideological and cultural dominance by the Chinese dynasties. The concept “Chinese world order” (instead of the “tribute system”) captures better imperial China’s foreign relations. See Y. Li (2004) for a recent overview of the tribute system and its changes in Chinese history, and Hevia (1995, pp. 8–15) for a quite different but interesting critique of the tribute system theory.

41. For instance, Emperor Yongle (r. 1403–1424) attacked the Kingdom of Annam (roughly, present northern Vietnam), a Confucian state that posed no major threat to the Ming dynasty.

42. This was particularly true of the Qing rulers. As scholars have recently argued, at the height of their power Qing rulers envisaged their empire more in “Inner Asian” than in Chinese terms, even though they implemented the Confucian political model wherever ethnic Chinese dominated (Elliott 2001; Rhoads 2000).

43. For recent theories on nomad-Chinese relationships, see Crossley (1999; Di Cosmo 1999a, 2001; Perdue 2002, 2005; Waley-Cohen 2006).

44. de Vries (1980).

45. Zhu (1972).

China during the Eastern Han dynasty and the rise of nomad or semi-nomad states during the Age of Disunion. Again, during the prolonged period of cold after 1000 CE, nomads invaded China repeatedly, leading to the rise of the following dynasties of nomadic or semi-nomadic origins: Xixia (1038–1227), Jin (1115–1234), Liao (916–1125), Yuan, and Qing. Second, the influxes of nomads or herders before 1000 CE always plunged China into prolonged disunion; the arrival of the Xianyun and Rong contributed to the collapse of the Western Zhou dynasty,⁴⁶ and nomadic migrations and invasions spurred by cold similarly brought on the Age of Disunion.⁴⁷ After 1000 CE, however, nomadic invasions brought about dynastic changes but not prolonged disunion. It seems that the Confucian-Legalist political system that emerged during the Western Han dynasty had grown increasingly robust.⁴⁸

Nomadic activities were more closely correlated than agricultural activities with climate changes, because a decline in temperature had a much bigger impact on nomads than on agriculturists for at least three reasons.⁴⁹ First, a large part of the steppes are agriculturally marginal; even in the best of times many plants have already reached their survival limits. Therefore even a slight decrease in temperature could have a significant impact on the availability of fodder for nomad herds.⁵⁰ Also, temperature decline had a greater impact on nomads than on agriculturists because the nomadic way of life was more sensitive to population pressure. If agriculturists were under population pressure due to a decline in carrying capacity,⁵¹ simple Malthusian controls would suffice.⁵² The death rate would rise until a new balance between resources and population was reached, but no permanent damage to the main forms of investment—land, buildings, tools, and social organizations—ensued. For nomads, however, livestock were both the main investment and the principal source of food. In difficult times, livestock could not be simply eaten, nor could livestock even provide herders with enough dairy products because the herds themselves were short of nutritious food. Nomads needed effective population controls long before the Malthusian cycle occurred, even during normal periods.⁵³ Third, colder climate

46. Di Cosmo (1999a, pp. 919–24; Li 2006).

47. Hsu (2002, pp. 220–44) further identifies four major cold phases between the second and seventh centuries CE and finds that most nomadic activities, in the form of southern migration or invasion, occurred during the four cold phases.

48. The same argument works to explain population increase. By the Ming and Qing dynasties, population increasingly became an important shaping force of imperial rule (Goldstone 1991), but it did not undermine the Confucian-Legalist mode of governance.

49. Some steppe nomads may also have practiced agriculture (Di Cosmo 1994). But steppe agriculture becomes difficult to impossible when the climate turns colder.

50. Bryson and Padoch (1981, p. 9) find that a decrease of only one Celsius degree in the average annual temperature in Iceland would shorten the growing period to less than three-fourths of its original length.

51. “Carrying capacity” can be briefly defined as the largest population size that given environment can sustain at a given time.

52. The logic here is adopted from Mann (1986, p. 52).

53. Barth (1961, p. 124). To expand the carrying capacity of the nomadic economy, nomads heavily relied on dairy products as staples (Wang 2008, pp. 29–30). Yet when the climate turns bad, the poorly nourished stock cannot even produce milk for the making of dairy products.

not only greatly lowered the carrying capacity of the steppes, it also increased the likelihood of snowstorms and other natural disasters that would kill off livestock in calamitous number.⁵⁴ Decimated herds would also compel the nomads to move south.

Climate changes, however, only outline a rough contour of nomadic activities. They do not explain the success or failure of a nomadic invasion. This leads us to the second structural condition shaping nomad-Chinese relations: the mentalities of the rulers on both sides. The importance of a ruler's mentality on the nomads' side cannot be more obvious: before Genghis Khan's troops swept across Eurasia, he would have, at minimum, been ambitious for conquest, though his original vision may have been less grand than his eventual achievement. The same was true of the Qing dynasty. Shortly after its establishment in 1636, the Manchus set their eyes on Ming China and finally seized the opportunity created by the late-Ming peasant rebellions to conquer China. Without their rulers' imaginations, the Manchus might have limited themselves to opportunistic plundering along the borders.

The impact of Chinese rulers' mentality on nomad-Chinese relations was a little more complicated. To understand this, let us return to the Chinese world-order theory. The "Chinese world order" is, in a nutshell, an extension of Confucianism's hierarchical sense of the world as it applies to diplomacy. The theory has great virtue because it captures the essence of Confucian mentality. On the other hand, it misses two aforementioned factors that also shaped Chinese rulership. First and foremost, many dynasties established in China had nomadic or semi-nomadic origin. A dynasty's ethnic origin crucially shaped its rulers' concept of their territories. The Qing emperors' great interest in maintaining control of the steppes obviously derived from their Inner Asian outlook, to some extent operative even after they had ruled China for many years.⁵⁵ The territorial extent of a major Chinese dynasty was strongly correlated with the ethnic origin of the ruling house. Empires of Chinese origin, such as the Han, Song, and Ming, were all relatively small.⁵⁶ Dynasties originating from or strongly influenced by nomads, such as the Yuan, Qing, and Tang, ruled considerably larger territories.⁵⁷

Second, the Chinese state, from Western Han to Qing, was not merely a Confucian state, but a Confucian-Legalist state. Legalism, which favored

54. For example, *Grand Historian* ("History of the Xiongnu"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2915) records a massive die-off of Xiongnu livestock due to a big snowstorm in 104 BCE.

55. Elliott (2001); Perdue (2002, 2005).

56. Mid- and later Western Han was large, due to Emperor Wu's wars with the Xiongnu nomads. It remains, however, an exception that proves the rule.

57. The grandfather of Li Yuan (founding emperor of the Tang dynasty) was one of the most powerful generals of the Western Wei dynasty (534–557), established by the Xianbei. Li Yuan's mother, Lady Dugu, was the daughter of Dugu Xin, who was another important Western Wei general of Xianbei origin. The Tang dynasty founders inherited the cultures of both the Chinese and the nomads.

instrumental rationalism, was also very influential in forming rulers' mentalities. The founding emperors of a dynasty were never much constrained by Confucian doctrines. None of the founding emperors were Confucian scholars themselves or born into a Confucian scholar family. They mostly acquired the throne through military force and therefore tended to be Legalists by instinct, instrumental in their rule, and likely to resort to arms to solve problems. Founding emperors also had more autonomy in policymaking because of their military achievements and because Confucian bureaucrats had not yet settled into their posts. These characteristics of newly founded dynasties and their founders help to explain why expansionism tended to occur mostly in the earlier years of a dynasty.⁵⁸

Even though Fairbank's Chinese-world-order theory missed these notable exceptions, it is still quite a good model for two reasons. First, in comparison with nomadic rulers, rulers of the settled world were much less interested in the barren land of the steppes apart from their security concerns. Moreover, conquest in the steppes was always enormously costly. Agrarian empires were therefore inclined to adopt less costly hegemonic strategies (such as granting titles, concluding marriage alliances, giving gifts, divide and rule, etc.), if they could, to gain control over the nomadic polities.

This logic, however, applies to any agrarian empire. It was the nature of the Confucian-Legalist state that geared the Chinese rulers to adopt a particular kind of hegemonic strategy—the Chinese world order—in their attempts to gain control of nomadic polities. In the dynasties of Chinese origin, it was inevitable that, once the “early” stage of the dynasty had passed, the emperors would be greatly constrained by the Confucian bureaucracy,⁵⁹ and court politics would be dominated by Confucians who had only a secondary interest in military affairs. Such a state would be naturally inclined to manage China's foreign relations using a hegemonic but not militarist Chinese-world-order model. Since major Chinese dynasties were mostly long-lived, the Fairbankian model is a good approximation of foreign relations in a stabilized state.⁶⁰

In dynasties of nomadic or semi-nomadic origins the conduct of foreign affairs was more complicated. In general, however, major dynasties of nomadic or semi-nomadic origins sooner or later adopted Confucianism as a ruling ideology and relied on the Confucian-Legalist bureaucracy to rule the most populated part of China, with concomitant decline in the rulers' autonomy. Even in interstate dealings,

58. See Mote (1999, pp. 608–12) for the early Ming military expeditions under the Yongle emperor.

59. See Huang (1981) regarding how a Ming dynasty emperor was educated by Confucian scholars in his childhood and constrained by the Confucian bureaucracy during his reign.

60. Emperor Wu of the Western Han dynasty was perhaps the only major exception. During his reign he actively adopted Confucianism as state ideology, reintroduced Legalist doctrines in government, and implemented aggressive foreign policies. Yet, this is the exception that proves the rule. Emperor Wu ruled at a time when Huang-Lao philosophy, which emphasizes small government and passive rule, was a prevailing state ideology (chapter 9), and Confucianism was not yet ascendant. These conditions would have facilitated the dynamic rule of a vigorous and militarily inclined emperor almost seventy years after the inception of the dynasty.

although rulers in dynasties of nomadic or semi-nomadic origins might hold different worldviews and have greater autonomy in policymaking than their Chinese counterparts, they adopted the Fairbankian Chinese world order as the ideological base of their foreign policy. Based on the tribute that the Qing court expected to receive from various countries and the various measures that it used to maintain the desired relations with these countries, Fairbank shows that Qing foreign policy was largely based on a Confucian worldview.⁶¹ In other words, though the Qing rulers inherited an Inner Asian mentality, the ideological base of Qing foreign policy was nonetheless Confucianism. By “Inner Asian mentality,” we mean only that the Qing rulers, compared with their Chinese counterparts, took greater interest in Inner Asian affairs, were more skillful in dealing with the nomads, and were more likely to resort to force in implementing a world order that nevertheless contained many of the Confucian doctrines.

The most important elements in shaping nomad-Chinese relationships, however, were the comparative advantages of the competing societies and the mutual learning that took place between them. The natural warrior theory encompasses several mechanisms that favored nomads in their competition with the settled peoples. These mechanisms are so compelling that even opponents of the theory also use them in analyzing nomad-Chinese relations.⁶² Certain mechanisms, of course, favored the settled at the expense of the nomads, and one of these was the nomad land’s perilous natural environment. Unexpected natural disasters could greatly weaken the nomads.⁶³ Another was the nomads’ sociopolitical organization. Nomads had to move from grassland to grassland to raise their livestock.⁶⁴ Only the tribe was a form of political organization sufficiently flexible for nomadic life;⁶⁵ even a nomadic empire had the structure of a tribal confederation. Often a nomadic empire was held together by a resourceful empire builder in possession of relatively great wealth acquired by successful plundering as well as by the expectation of other tribal leaders to plunder successfully with that empire builder,⁶⁶ but such an empire was very likely to collapse when the charismatic emperor died or when pillaging was no longer effective.⁶⁷ Instability had always been a major problem for the nomadic empires in their prolonged geopolitical competition with the Chinese. The Eastern Han Empire benefited greatly from the

61. Fairbank (1968).

62. Di Cosmo (1994, 2001).

63. Graff (2002b, p. 44).

64. As Lattimore (1951, p. 66) has nicely put it, “No single pasture could have any value unless the people using it were free to move to some other pasture. . . . The right to move prevailed over the right to camp in the nomadic mode of production.” See also Anderson (1974, pp. 217–28) for an excellent characterization of the nomads’ mode of production.

65. Barfield (1989, pp. 8–9).

66. Barfield (1989, p. 5).

67. The opportunistic expansion and precipitate contraction of nomadic empires have been treated by a number of scholars (Anderson 1974, pp. 222–23; Hildinger 2001).

instability of Xiongnu politics and the eventual splitting of the Xiongnu tribal confederation into Northern and Southern Xiongnu in 49 BCE.⁶⁸ During the early Tang dynasty, Jieli (Illig, r. 620–630) faced immediate internal revolt after his Eastern Turkic Khaganate failed to emerge victorious from battles with the Tang army.⁶⁹ Prolonged strife among Zunghar elites after the death of Galdan Tseren in 1745 brought on the destruction of the Zunghar Empire by the Qing.⁷⁰ The only exception to this litany of nomad defeats was the Khitan Liao dynasty, which China's newly founded Northern Song dynasty was unable to destroy. This is not a surprise, however. When Song and Liao faced off against each other, Liao had already occupied a large part of settled northern China and enjoyed the advantage of being both an agrarian and a nomadic empire.

Although nomads were natural warriors despite the above-mentioned weaknesses, the agriculturists were not natural prey, as the natural warrior theory may imply. They had many advantages the nomads lacked. Agricultural land has a much higher carrying capacity than steppe land, which lent the agriculturists the potential to overwhelm the nomads with their military strength and assimilative numbers. Settled life also facilitated major organizational development, such as the organs of state and the bureaucracy, which originated in settled communities and only eventually were adopted by the nomads.⁷¹ Nomadic groups could develop their military potential to an unimaginable apex, only to fade away without a trace. The settled populations, however, were more capable of developing and accumulating organizational and technological know-how. For these reasons, the extent of nomadic Inner Asia kept fluctuating, although tending toward contraction,⁷² and for the same reasons, by the eighteenth century, settled populations from the two sides of Eurasia (Qing China and Tsarist Russia) were able to squeeze the steppe nomads between them,⁷³ and ultimately to partition Inner Asia.

The more accumulative and consecutive nature of sedentary culture also facilitated the development of philosophies and institutional religions that formed the ideological core of a civilization. In the case of China, invading nomads, to secure their domination, sooner or later had to embrace Confucian ideology and culture, which fostered their assimilation into the much larger Chinese population. This process backs up Fairbank's Chinese-world-order theory: by allowing China to maintain its self-aggrandizing view of the world and at the same time motivating

68. The Southern Xiongnu became crucial allies of the Eastern Han dynasty. See Psarras (2004) for the Xiongnu split and the conflicts among Xiongnu aristocrats.

69. Graff (2002a, pp. 186–87). Natural disasters were another factor leading to the demise of the Turkic empire.

70. Perdue (2005, pp. 270–74).

71. Loewe (1974, p. 79), in his analysis of the Chinese-Xiongnu wars during the Western Han dynasty, has also pointed out that organization was a major strength of the Western Han.

72. Sinor (1990, p. 3).

73. Beckwith (2009, p. 232) sees the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk between Qing China and Russia as a crucial event, signifying the partition of the steppe between two rising agrarian empires.

the nomads to adopt the Chinese world order in order to legitimize their rule over conquered China.

Since both the nomads and the Chinese had advantages, military conflict compelled them to imitate each other. Let us now briefly analyze the processes of mutual learning and adaptation between the nomads (or herders) and the Chinese from the beginning of the Western Zhou to the end of the Western Han dynasties, to see how mutual leaning and adaptation within a situation of military conflict worked to shape their relationship.

The Western Zhou political order collapsed in part due to the immigration and invasion of pastoral populations from the north (chapter 2). Before they entered ancient China, these herders had most likely lived in stateless societies, but they soon acquired organizational know-how from the Chinese and established state systems. Recent archaeological discoveries in Zhongshan, a major Eastern Zhou state of Di origin, reveal that its culture was strikingly similar to that of neighboring Chinese states, and that the Zhongshan people cast various bronze ritual vessels with equally high skills and for the same ritual purposes as their Chinese neighbors.⁷⁴ During the Western Zhou and early Eastern Zhou periods, the non-Chinese states posed a threat to the ancient Chinese states. This motivated the Chinese states to learn as well. One of the major combat techniques that the ancient Chinese states learned from the Di people was infantry warfare, which Eastern Zhou states put to increasing use.⁷⁵ During the Age of Total War, by expanding northward the Chinese states eliminated the buffer between the Xiongnu and themselves, giving rise to several hundred years of almost continual conflict. By learning Xiongnu cavalry warfare, the Chinese generally obtained the upper hand during that period. Their pressure on the Xiongnu became increasingly irresistible after the First Emperor of Qin sent 300,000 soldiers and defeated the Xiongnu troops in the Ordos region in 215 BCE.⁷⁶ The defeat placed huge isomorphic pressure on the Xiongnu, causing the tribes to collaborate in forming the Xiongnu empire in 209 BCE, as defense against the threat from China.⁷⁷ Xiongnu rulers of an *empire* were able to incorporate various tribal forces into a greatly expanded army.⁷⁸

Having acquired Chinese organizational know-how, the Xiongnu cavalry became a formidable threat to the Western Han dynasty.⁷⁹ It was now the Chinese

74. Falkenhausen (2006, pp. 254–62).

75. *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 1, 541 BCE).

76. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Meng Tian"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2565).

77. Di Cosmo (1994, pp. 1117–18).

78. The Xiongnu empire reported to have about 300,000 soldiers only a few years after its establishment (*Grand Historian*, "History of the Xiongnu"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, p. 2890).

79. The combination of the nomads' fighting skills, Chinese organizational know-how and other technologies was behind the Mongols' success as well. After repeated defeats at the hands of the Mongols, Emperor Ai of the Jurchen Jin (r. 1224–1234) commented insightfully: "[T]he Mongols are able to defeat us frequently because they have better horses and are backed up by Chinese technologies" (Z. Chen 1995, p. 365). The Jin dynasty was founded by Manchurian semi-nomads. Its people became largely sedentary after the Jin had ruled a large part of northern China for over a century.

who were compelled to learn from their adversaries. By the reign of Emperor Wu, the cavalry armies led by Wei Qing and Huo Qubing were able to advance deep into the steppes and to launch successful surprise attacks, just as the Xiongnu had surprise-attacked the Chinese.⁸⁰ The balance of power had shifted once again. Such mutual learning and adaptation between rivals continued long after the Western Han dynasty.

Three historical patterns shed light on the concept of mutual learning and adaptation between competing peoples. First, it was on the frontiers of China that the largest, most complex, and most powerful nomadic or semi-nomadic empires, such as Xiongnu, Turk, Mongol, and Qing, emerged. In a nutshell, the Chinese dynasties in their heyday tended to be very powerful, which compelled the nomad rulers to learn and adapt energetically in order to survive. Moreover, the notably effective imperial system of China must have roused ambitious nomad rulers to want to emulate it.⁸¹ Finally, most families of nomadic empire builders were at one time co-opted by a Chinese dynasty as border military officers. These officers were familiar with China's culture and administrative system, and hired Chinese advisers. When a declining Chinese dynasty was no longer able to control its border effectively, some of these officers or their descendants started to build nomadic empires based on the Chinese imperial model. Together, these factors facilitated the occasional emergence of formidable nomad empires on the Chinese frontier.

Second, steppe nomads were militarily formidable but relatively incapable of establishing durable empires that could rule both sides of the Great Wall (the only partial exception being the relatively short-lived Yuan dynasty). Throughout the history of China, it was the militarily less formidable semi-nomadic Manchurians who often benefited from the nomad-Chinese geopolitical conflict⁸² and established several durable empires (e.g., Tuoba Wei, Khitan Liao, Jurchen Jin, and Manchu Qing), ruling peoples on both sides of the Great Wall. The Manchurians were seldom at the forefront of the nomad-Chinese geopolitical competition. When the steppe nomads and the Chinese were both militarily strong, Manchuria tended to be a buffer zone, and the Manchurian tribes became pawns in the wider geopolitical conflict. Yet, their marginal status enabled them to learn from both the Chinese and the steppe nomads. Historically, small kingdoms inspired by Chinese and by nomadic neighbors frequently emerged in Manchuria.⁸³

80. *Grand Historian* ("Biography of Wei Qing"; reproduced in Pei, Sima, and Zhang 1959, pp. 2921–48).

81. Genghis Khan's imperial ambition, for example, must have been greatly stimulated by the presence of the Liao, Jin, and Xia dynasties, the three powerful Chinese-inspired, semi-nomadic empires that dominated the Mongol tribes.

82. Unlike the northern steppes, the eastern steppe of Manchuria is covered with forests and arable land and supports a mixed economy (Wang 2008, pp. 195–219).

83. Learned Chinese who had found their way to Manchuria also played an active role in the establishment and development of the early nomadic kingdoms or empires in this region.

When Chinese or steppe nomads fell into disarray, the Manchurian kingdoms could expand into large empires. Owing to the Manchurian people's greater familiarity with both the Chinese and the nomad cultures, and given their military and demographic weaknesses, the large empires established by the Manchurians tended to be much more adaptive and skillful in dealing with both the Chinese and the steppe nomads than the empires of either Chinese or steppe nomadic origins. In short, the semi-nomadic tribes of Manchuria were often the surprising winners of the northeast Asian geopolitical conflicts precisely because of their interstitial status and resulting relative military weakness.⁸⁴

Lastly, in the eighteenth century three powerful empires (Qing China, Russia, and Zunghar) confronted one another in geopolitical struggles. Did the Zunghar Empire even have a chance of sustaining a geopolitical conflict with Qing China at the time? Historian Peter Perdue has replied in the affirmative, arguing the existence of "multiple opportunities" for all the parties involved and stating that "the Qing conquest and elimination of Zunghars was never inevitable."⁸⁵ My understanding of the nomad-Chinese relationship is greatly indebted to Perdue's masterful account of the eighteenth-century Qing-Zunghar conflict, but a few sociological insights would not be amiss: the Zunghars were unable to exert nearly the pressures on the Qing dynasty that the Xiongnu and Turks had exerted on the Han and Tang dynasties. And whereas Qing China was able to challenge the Zunghars in its heartland, the Zunghars were unable to respond in kind. In other words, the Zunghars never truly held the upper hand vis-à-vis Qing China. Further, the Zunghars were dealing with an enemy vastly more formidable than Ming China. Compared with the Ming, the Manchus had a stronger interest in dominating Inner Asia and, moreover, were much more familiar with nomadic life and more skillful at dividing and ruling the steppe nomads. Finally, as mentioned earlier, a nomad empire was very likely to disintegrate because of internal strife following the death of the charismatic leader or the inexpediency of plundering. The Zunghar empire was unfortunate in attaining its maximum strength just when the power of Qing China was at its zenith.⁸⁶ In other

84. This was also to a certain degree true of the Mongols, who grew formidable interstitially, in a power vacuum created by the Jin conquest of Khitan Liao (Jackson 2009, p. 26). Nomadic tribes located interstitially close to major agrarian empires were both pressured and galvanized to form their own empire.

85. Perdue (2005, p. 9).

86. It is now fashionable to label "early modern" the Eurasian empires that preceded the rise of the West, such as Manchu Qing, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire, in order to emphasize that they were similar in nature and development to the early modern European empires, and their empire-building efforts were similar to those of the early modern European empires. Let us, however, consider the Manchu Qing Empire. Its institutional, economic, and cultural achievements were impressive, and before the early nineteenth century it had been a first-rate continental power. Still, it was not on the same developmental track as the Western European empires. Qing showed no possibility of breaking away from the Confucian-Legalist political-cultural framework and attaining industrial capitalism and modernity without the impact of Western imperialism (Chapter 13). Qing's military expansion resembled more the Western Han military expansion than the expansion of the early modern European empires. In short, although the expansion of the traditional Eurasian empires and the "early modern" European empires occurred about the same time, their temporal patterns were *distinctive*.

words, the Qing dynasty was able to conquer the Zunghars founded by Choros Erdeniin Galdan (r. 1671–1697) largely because while the Qing was enjoying an extended period of mid-dynasty stability from Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) to Qianlong (r. 1736–1795), as was typical of long-lasting Chinese dynasties, the Zunghars were frequently bothered and eventually weakened by internal strife among the elites when its rulers were unable to win the wars with Qing.⁸⁷ Like Perdue, I see Russia's ascent as contributing to the demise of the Zunghars.⁸⁸ Regardless of Russia's position in the Qing-Zunghar conflicts, before Russia's ascent, nomads vanquished by China had always been able to retreat deep into the steppes, there to maintain their nomadic lifestyle and regain their strength until China was weak again. By the eighteenth century, however, Russia held the steppes, which allowed Qing China to eliminate the Zunghars in places within its reach. That two powerful agrarian empires were able to constrain the Zunghars in an area between them was not a historical accident. Because of the cumulative nature of their culture, the agriculturists were significantly advanced beyond the steppe nomads in organizational and technological development, and that made all the difference.⁸⁹

SUMMARY

This chapter explains why the frequent dominance of empires of nomadic or semi-nomadic origins in China did not alter the Confucian-Legalist state or culture in any fundamental way. It then explains the dynamics of millennia-long nomad-Chinese geopolitical competition. The explanation rests on the interplay of three sets of structural factors and associated mechanisms: climatic and ecological conditions, the mentality of the rulers on both sides, and most importantly, the comparative advantages of the nomads and settled Chinese, which derive from different environmental conditions, modes of production, and sociopolitical organization. The comparative advantages that the nomads and agriculturists alternatively enjoyed not only shaped the contours of nomad-Chinese geopolitical relations, but also sowed the seeds for the eventual decline of nomad power in China as well as elsewhere in Eurasia.

87. Di Cosmo (2009b, p. 352; Perdue 2005, pp. 270–72).

88. Perdue (2005, pp. 161–73, 211–27).

89. It was, therefore, also not an accident that the European part of the steppes was incorporated into the domains of the Ottoman, the Austrian, and the Russian Empires after 1500 (McNeill 1964).

Neo-Confucianism and the Advent of a “Confucian Society”

During the Tang dynasty, the power of the great families was declining, but their influence in politics persisted until the mid-Tang period.¹ Also during the Tang dynasty, although Buddhism's influence in politics had waned in comparison with its influence during the Age of Disunion, and Buddhism was becoming increasingly adapted to China's cultural environment, it remained influential in all spheres of life to a degree that some Confucian-minded scholars found threatening.² Not until the Song dynasty did the aristocratic “great families” completely disappear, and Confucianism not only become more influential but also penetrate more deeply into all levels of society. These developments during the Song dynasty would have been impossible without the rise of Neo-Confucianism and the much increased use of the civil-service examination in selecting officials. This chapter discusses the great impact of Neo-Confucianism on society in association with the expansion of the civil-service examination. It is a story of the much closer symbiosis between politics and ideology in China after the Tang dynasty.

THE CONFUCIAN REVIVAL

The concept of a Neo-Confucianism is of Western coinage. In a narrower sense, Neo-Confucianism refers only to a school of Song philosophy known as *lixue* (the School of Principle);³ its influence began to be felt during the Northern Song dynasty, and it shaped the politics, society, and intellectual environment of the Ming and Qing dynasties. In a broader sense Neo-Confucianism was a Confucian revival movement that first appeared during the late Tang dynasty.⁴ The

1. Bol (1992, pp. 36–48). The status of the great families lingered on until the early Northern Song dynasty.

2. Most Tang dynasty emperors, with the exception of Emperor Wu (r. 840–846), patronized Buddhism. The Tang dynasty was also a golden age for the development of Buddhist philosophy (Sharf 2002, pp. 5–6). With the exception of Han Yu and his followers, most Tang scholars were much less eager to defend Confucian orthodoxy than were Song scholars (McMullen 1988, pp. 250–62). During Emperor Wu's persecution of Buddhism, he laicized 265,000 monks and nuns and confiscated 150,000 of their slaves together with some 4,000 monasteries, 40,000 chapels, and millions of acres of land (Bol 1992, p. 22; Ge 2001, p. 141). The amount of property and manpower confiscated indicates the scope of Buddhism in Tang society. See also Gernet (1995) and Weinstein (1987) for the course of Buddhism in the Tang dynasty.

3. Chan (1986); de Bary (1981, 1989); Metzger (1977); Munro (1988).

4. Bol (2008); Hartman (1986); Kasoff (1984); Liu (1988); Mote (1999, pp. 144–49); Tillman (1992); Yu (2004).

movement gained momentum during the Northern Song dynasty owing to the expansion and vastly increased importance of the civil-service examination, the development of woodblock-printing technology and resulting profusion of books,⁵ and a relatively open intellectual environment.⁶ As the revival progressed, different schools of thought, generally grouped as pragmatic/utilitarian versus idealistic, all emerged. The intellectual division was furthered by palace politics, factional struggles, personal friendships and enmities, and differing ideas regarding practical problems of government and society,⁷ which made the whole story of the Confucian revival too complex to be rehearsed in a few pages.⁸ But apart from a few utilitarian philosophers such as Chen Liang (1143–1194) and Ye Shi (1150–1223),⁹ the scholars of the Confucian revival more or less shared the following common grounds:

First, beginning in the early Northern Song dynasty, Confucian scholars had developed a strong sense of mission and social responsibility.¹⁰ Fan Zhongyan's (989–1052) famous dictum, "Be first to worry about society's problems and last to enjoy society's pleasures," became the maxim of Confucian idealists. They emphasized the importance of both personal cultivation and practical effectiveness. They believed that a good Confucian official, even when not in office or purged, should continue cultivating himself, improving communities of their home, and enlightening others. "Cultivating one's moral character, guiding and governing the family, managing the country, and harmonizing the world" became the ethical standard of the new (or Neo-)Confucians.¹¹

5. China's highly commercial printing-publishing culture has endured since the Song dynasty (Chia 2002; Chow 2004; Twitchett 1983). In the late Ming dynasty, Nanjing was home to 180 publishers, some of them impressively large (Chia 2005).

6. Legend had it that Zhao Kuangyin, founding emperor of Song, placed a stone tablet in a secret chamber, on which he enjoined his successors never to execute any high-level officials for criticizing the emperor or voicing opinions contrary to his. The chamber was guarded by illiterate eunuchs so that no outsiders would know what it contained, but each newly enthroned emperor was required to go into the chamber before his coronation to receive this ancestral teaching. Not until 1126, when the Jurchen sacked Bianjing, the Northern Song capital, was the secret revealed. During the Song dynasty, when a civilian official lost favor at court, he would generally be transferred to a lower-level post. As far as I know, no high-level civilian officials were executed for political reasons. According to Yu (2004, pp. 383–86), this family teaching of the Song imperial house allowed Song scholars a freedom of expression rare in Chinese history.

7. Scholars and officials during both Northern and Southern Song dynasties were highly divided on the Khitan Liao and Jurchen Jin problems between the war and concession parties.

8. Levine (2008); Yu (2004). Yu (2004, chap. 7) has given excellent accounts of how political differences, factions, and personalities intertwined and shaped Song politics and intellectual history.

9. Chen Liang and Ye Shi actually shared many ideas with other Song Neo-Confucians. Their philosophies stressed social and political effectiveness, whereas the more idealistic scholars tended to place personal cultivation above all. See Tillman (1982) for the famous Chen Liang–Zhu Xi (1130–1200) debate.

10. Their sense of mission originated from the following desires: to mitigate the influence of Buddhism, to strengthen the state, and, most fundamentally, to retrieve "this culture of ours" that had been lost for more than a thousand years (Bol 1992; Kasoff 1984; Wei 2003, chaps. 28–38; Yu 2004). It is worth reiterating that the Song dynasty was a rich but militarily weak state. Even in its heyday, it was frequently defeated by Liao and Xixia, and thereafter, it resorted to huge indemnities to appease the aggressive enemy states.

11. The phrase is from *Great Learning* (*Daxue*), one of the Four Books, which were the classics sanctioned by the Song Neo-Confucians.

Second, they opposed the Han dynasty Confucians’ interpretations of Confucianism. The Han Confucians had followed the teaching of Xunzi (ca. 313–238 BCE) that human nature, being essentially evil, must be improved by education and discipline; whereas the Song thinkers followed Mencius, especially his theory of the original goodness of human nature. Central to Mencius’s philosophy is his concept that goodness is innate but that no one is endowed from birth with moral perfection; only through constant self-cultivation can one reach moral perfection. The Han Confucians had for the most part endorsed the following Five Confucian Classics: *Book of Odes (Shijing)*, *Book of Documents (Shangshu)*, *Book of Rites (Liji)*, *Book of Changes (Yijing)*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)*, whereas the Song Neo-Confucians looked more to the following Four Books as key to the making of young scholars: *Analects (Lunyu)*, *Mencius (Mengzi)*, *Great Learning (Daxue)*, and *Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong)*.¹² Comparing the Five Classics and the Four Books, it is plain that Song Neo-Confucians found greater substance in those classics that were not legacies of the Western Zhou.¹³

Third, Neo-Confucian scholars tended to delve into metaphysical speculation, which was characteristic of Buddhism but alien to ancient Chinese thinking. Notwithstanding that the Neo-Confucian revival emerged at least in part as a rebuttal of Buddhism’s dismissal of this-worldly concerns, most leading Song Confucians had close Buddhist friends and were well versed in Buddhist teachings.¹⁴ The intellectual depth of Buddhism prompted the Song Neo-Confucians to adapt Buddhist concepts and ways of thinking into their own philosophy. Among various Song schools of thought, the ontology of the *lixue* can be summarized in two dicta: the earlier, coined by Cheng Yi (1033–1107), reads, “Principle is one but its manifestations are many” (*li yi shu fen*). Since a principle could have endless manifestations, *lixue* scholars believed that one must investigate all aspects of the natural and human worlds to achieve a true understanding of principle.¹⁵

12. *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean* are two chapters of the *Book of Rites* (reproduced in *Shisanjing Zhushu* 1980). See Gardner (2007) for the English translations of the Four Books.

13. This is not to say that the Neo-Confucians disdained or dismissed the Five Classics. Zhu Xi, for example, wrote two works on the *Book of Change* (Bol 2008, p. 227). The shift in emphasis from the Five Classics to the Four Books was more a pedagogical than a philosophical change.

14. Egan (1994, chap. 6); Kasoff (1984, pp. 14–17). For example, Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu, Wang Anshi, Su Shi, Zhang Zai, Cheng Hao, and Zhu Xi all have close Buddhist friends and were well versed in Buddhist texts. Buddhist monks at the time were also trying to produce teachings that would be compatible to Confucian ethics (Yu 2004, pp. 64–109).

15. The ontology of *lixue* was not shared by other Neo-Confucian schools at the time. One of the major opponents of the *lixue* (School of Reason) was *xinxue* (School of Mind), whose central figure was Lu Jiuyuan (Lu Xiangshan; Tillman 1992, pp. 187–230). Most crucially, Lu Jiuyuan opposed Zhu Xi’s dictum that knowledge is acquired by the observation and investigation of things on two grounds. One, since the natural and human worlds comprise an infinity of particulars, we would at best be pursuing the universal (principle) using limited means, which was a waste of time. Two, Zhu believed that natural and human worlds all followed the same universal ethical principle. But according to Lu, the natural and human worlds are little, if at all, related, and furthermore, the knowledge of one’s natural “surroundings had nothing to do with one’s inner conscience.” Therefore, to understand and acquire ultimate truth and perfect virtue, “all a person needed to do was to examine himself and rectify his own mind” (Li 1971, p. 223).

Extrapolating on Chen Yi's aphorism, Zhu Xi added, "The acquisition of knowledge comes from the observation and investigation of things" (*gewu zhizhi*).¹⁶ Notably, to Neo-Confucians the word "principle" referred only to ethical principle. The "things"—that is, the particulars of humankind and nature—interested Zhu Xi and his followers only insofar as, if properly observed and investigated, they would reveal the universal ethical principle applicable to humanity. Zhu Xi's "investigation of things" sounds empirical, but in no way was he referring to science as we moderns understand it.¹⁷

THE RISE OF A CONFUCIAN SOCIETY

Neo-Confucianism was not merely a school of philosophy. Song Neo-Confucians knew that to expand and intensify the influence of their ideology in society, it must be supported by institutions and organizations. Many leading Song Neo-Confucians were institution builders, though the focus of their efforts changed somewhat between the Northern and Southern Song dynasties. The leading Northern Song scholars concentrated on strengthening the civil-service examination and, to that end, encouraging the government to establish schools in urban areas and in county seats.¹⁸ By the Southern Song dynasty, Neo-Confucian scholars became more interested in establishing private academies in rural areas.¹⁹ Their efforts, in conjunction with the increasing importance of the civil-service examinations, facilitated the penetration of Confucianism into all spheres of Chinese life as never before, creating a Confucian society.²⁰

The examination as it came into being during the Sui and Tang dynasties was altogether small in scale.²¹ During the Northern Song dynasty the examination system became the defining institution of society. It was as crucial to the dissemination of Neo-Confucianism as to the staffing of the administration. Society responded quickly to this new development: Only about 5,200 candidates sat for the departmental (or capital) examination in 977,²² a number that by 992 had risen to

16. This phrase is also found in the *Great Learning*.

17. Cohen (1994, p. 454).

18. Teachers at these schools received a salary from the government and the student a stipend, though whether these were enough to live on we cannot be sure.

19. Not all Neo-Confucian scholars perceived the value or necessity of institutions. Lu Jiuyuan, for example, never established any private academy of his own, though his disciples did.

20. This book characterizes Chinese society during and after the Song dynasty as a "Confucian society" only in the limited sense that Confucian ideals and institutions had penetrated deeper into Chinese society with the advent of Neo-Confucianism.

21. During the whole of the Tang dynasty, only 6,427 examination candidates were awarded the highest degree, the *jinshi* (Shi 1995, p. 911). *Jinshi* constituted only about 2.5 percent of the ranked government positions in 737. If we include men who had passed other, less prestigious examinations, degree holders staffed no more than 15 percent of the ranked positions at any given time during the Tang dynasty (Chaffee 1995, p. 15).

22. Examinations for the Song civil service were hierarchical. In brief, one first sat for the examination given in one's own prefecture (*jieshi* or "prefectural exam") and, if successful, became a *juren* (presented man). A presented man was eligible to take the "departmental" (*shengshi* or "capital") exam held once every three years, and if

17,300.²³ For the lower level prefectural examination, the number of candidates rose from 80,000 in the eleventh century to 400,000 by the thirteenth century.²⁴ And for every man who sat for the prefectural examination, we can assume there were quite a few who had studied for it but were never sufficiently prepared to take it. The examination must have "reached down into localities and [drawn] on a local pool far broader than the group that (at any stage) succeeded."²⁵

The impact of the examination system on Song society has been a major point of debate among scholars. One strong disagreement concerns the level of upward mobility in Song China. Kracke bases high mobility on the fact that over 50 percent of *jinsi* degree holders had paternal great-grandfathers, grandfathers, and fathers who had no official background.²⁶ On the other hand, based on wider criteria, including family wealth, social status of members of the extended paternal and maternal families, and social status of the family by marriage, Kracke's critics see little mobility in Song China.²⁷ The degree of upward mobility during and after the Song dynasty will always remain in question,²⁸ but scholars of both camps agree that, beginning in the Song dynasty and ever since, it was examination success, not wealth or ascribed social status, that determined one's success and status.²⁹ The "great families" and their culture disappeared as a result.³⁰ The terms "scholar," "illustrious man," and "official" became virtually synonymous.

During the Northern Song dynasty, over 430 government schools were opened for men opting to take the examination.³¹ Construction of government-initiated schools peaked between 1022 and 1085, reflecting the government's effort to cope

successful, to be called *jinsi* (advanced scholar). The final, or "palace" exam (*dianshi*) ranked the *jinsi* in order of the brilliance and scholarship evidenced in their examination essays as well as in their responses to the questions raised by the examination officers in the palace exam.

23. Further exemplifying the examinations as a channel to officialdom, Emperor Taizong (r. 976–997) granted a total of 507 *jinsi* degrees in 977. When later years saw an oversupply of men qualified to become officials, the departmental examination was held only once every three years, and the standards for passing that examination were greatly raised. According to Chaffee (1995, p. 25), *jinsi* degree holders constituted 40.8 percent of those who entered the bureaucracy in 1213.

24. Ge (2001, p. 271). Northern Song's population numbered between seventy and eighty million in the late eleventh century. The peak population of the much smaller Southern Song dynasty was only about fifty million in the thirteenth century (Zhao and Xie 1988, chap. 7). In other words, while the number of people who lived in the Song domain declined, the number of candidates for the entering (prefectural) civil-service examination increased fivefold (see Chaffee, 1995, p. 50).

25. Hymes (1986, p. 4). Bol (2008, p. 222) estimated that from the Southern Song on, 10 percent of adult males had some education. By the Qing dynasty, many villages in southern China had schools that taught the rudiments of reading and writing, though only the villages with a tradition of scholarly achievement supported the kind of school that would prepare students to take the civil-service examination (Freedman 1966, p. 71). See also Chaffee (1995); Elman (2000); Lee (1982); and Lo (1987) for more on the examinations during the Song and later dynasties.

26. Kracke (1947, 1953, 1967).

27. Beattie (1979); Hartwell (1982); Hymes (1986).

28. Ho (1964, chap. 1); Wilson (1995, pp. 24–25).

29. Hymes (1986, p. 3); Miyazaki (1981, p. 9).

30. Bol (1992, p. 34; 2008, pp. 32–42).

31. Chaffee (1995, p. 75). Some academies were also opened by private scholars during the Northern Song, and the number of these greatly increased during the Southern Song dynasty. The government school system also expanded during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Bol 2008, p. 234; Wang 2005, p. 43).

with the rising demand for education.³² More and more people were introduced to Neo-Confucian learning.³³ Those who passed the departmental examination became officials; retired officials and scholars who only passed the prefectural level examination or who studied rigorously but never took the examination or who, having taken and passed the examination, declined an official position, became *de facto* leaders of their communities.

The development of education and the examination system, together with the creation of local academies by Southern Song Neo-Confucians, facilitated the emergence of a “gentry class,” which would peak in both numbers and influence during the Ming and Qing dynasties.³⁴ Unlike the English gentry, the Chinese gentry acquired their status mainly from education rather than land and wealth; also unlike the English, their status was not inherited.³⁵ As gentry, they were community leaders. They sponsored local schools, promoted Confucianism and its ethics, provided welfare, arbitrated local disputes, and saw to the construction and upkeep of the local irrigation and road systems. Acting at the intersection between state and society, the gentry carried out all these functions on a volunteer basis, while at the same time representing local interests (or their own interests) in matters such as taxation and local public safety and consulting on state policy as it affected their locals.³⁶

Unfortunately, the expansion of public education produced more qualified scholars than the bureaucracy could absorb.³⁷ As markets boomed and the examinations became increasingly difficult, more and more learned people were only able to pass the lowest-level examination, and many failed to pass even that. These people had to earn their livings as village school teachers, clerks of the local government, helpers of rich families, ritual masters, doctors, merchants, accountants, or even writers of novels and plays for the urban entertainment business. Even in these capacities, they disseminated the Neo-Confucian culture.³⁸ Although many poor gentry or learned people must have pursued multiple careers (such as those just mentioned) and also read many books that were at odds with Confucian orthodoxy, as a class they derived their influence from Confucian learning. Inculcated as they were with a Neo-Confucian education, they propagated Neo-Confucianism as their second nature, and so they formed the backbone of Neo-Confucian society.

32. The board and expenses of the students in government-sponsored schools were largely covered by the state during the Song dynasty (Lee 1989).

33. Northern Song government schools at their peak registered some 200,000 students (Chaffee 1995, p. 78).

34. The gentry class, including family members, numbered about 5.5 million in the early nineteenth century, or 1.3 percent of the Chinese population at the time (Chang 1955, p. 113).

35. Chang (1955, pp. 3–6).

36. Chang (1955, pp. 51–70).

37. The Song civilian bureaucracy increased by only a few thousand between 1046 and 1213 (Chaffee 1995, p. 27)—much less than the increase in examination participants.

38. Ge (2001, p. 277); McKnight (1971).

Government schools were not the only consequential institutions behind the propagation of a Neo-Confucian society. When Song scholars championed Neo-Confucianism, they were at the same time aware of two problems. First, the civil-service examinations espoused Confucianism, but to prepare for and then sit for the examinations in order to become an official was itself a highly instrumental (i.e., self-serving) act. It deviated from Neo-Confucianism's original ethic.³⁹ Second, Neo-Confucianism lacked institutions equivalent to Buddhist monasteries and temples, which had penetrated deep into Chinese society, nor did it have a set of regularly practiced rituals that could shape people's emotions.⁴⁰ Consciously endeavoring to learn from Buddhist institutions, the Song Neo-Confucians improvised institutions and practices that facilitated the dissemination of Confucianism and left a deep mark on Chinese history.

Beginning in the Northern Song dynasty, and greatly intensifying their efforts during the Southern Song dynasty, Confucian scholars set about establishing private academies for advanced Confucian learning.⁴¹ Large academies, such as the Yuelu Academy and Bailudong (White Deer Grotto) Academy, could board close to a thousand students.⁴² Although their founders saw the problem with tailoring education to the passing of the examinations, they did not disapprove of the civil-service examination *per se*.⁴³ But in the academies they founded, they wished to offer genuine Neo-Confucian learning and ethics.⁴⁴ The institutions of Buddhism deeply influenced those in the private academies. The idea of establishing Neo-Confucian academies was inspired by the Buddhist retreat centers; many private academies were established in scenic areas like those where the Buddhist retreats were located;⁴⁵ some of the academies modeled their pedagogical methods after Chan Buddhist teaching;⁴⁶ and finally, the academies placed great emphasis on ritual observances as part of the curriculum, as in Buddhist ritual practice.⁴⁷

39. Lee (1989).

40. Ebrey (1989).

41. At least 425 academies were privately founded during the Song dynasty, over 300 of them during the Southern Song dynasty (Chaffee 1995, pp. 89–94; Z. Chen 1995, p. 991). Many leading Confucian scholars and local officials took part in private-academy-building activities, Zhu Xi alone founded nine academies (Tillman 2003, pp. 475–88). Many private academies were established by Neo-Confucian scholars while they were in office, and most also received financial assistance from the state (Z. Chen 1995, pp. 990–92). Scholar-gentry promotion of Confucian education lasted through the Ming and Qing dynasties, with varied degrees of state participation (Elman and Woodside 1994; Bol 2008).

42. Z. Chen (1995, p. 991).

43. Chaffee (1995, pp. 89–94).

44. Zhu Xi was concerned about the consequences of "teaching to the tests," but most ironically, his own philosophy was sanctioned as a state ideology and his Neo-Confucian curriculum became the standard thrust of the examinations during the later dynasties.

45. Z. Chan (1989, pp. 389–93).

46. Z. Chen (1995, p. 991).

47. According to Walton (1989, pp. 472–79), many Southern Song private schools owned an extensive inventory of sacrificial vessels and ceremonial garments for regular ritual activities to reinforce Confucian ideals.

Song scholars also fostered Neo-Confucianism in other ways.⁴⁸ They wrote family ritual books, assembled lineage-based village communities, composed communal compacts to regulate communities according to Neo-Confucian principles,⁴⁹ stressed elementary learning in the family and community,⁵⁰ promoted childhood education based on Confucian ethics,⁵¹ reformed religious beliefs and practices of the populace,⁵² played a leadership role in local public works and famine relief,⁵³ and conducted themselves as local models of Neo-Confucian ethics.⁵⁴ These efforts greatly facilitated the penetration of Neo-Confucianism into society. All of them reflect the impact of Buddhism. The Neo-Confucians believed that only through education and practice of Confucian rituals for weddings, funerals, festivals, and ancestral rites could the influence of Buddhism in Chinese society be constrained.⁵⁵ The practice of these Confucian rituals imbued “the Confucian household with some of the spirit of the monastery,”⁵⁶ which not only fostered the rise of a Neo-Confucian society, but also heightened the religious impact of Confucianism and galvanized its search for the ultimate source of moral order.⁵⁷

STATE POWER IN THE CONFUCIAN SOCIETY

Neo-Confucian social practices have been depicted as an effort to establish a new “social contract” with the state⁵⁸ and as the emergence of a nascent “public space” in China.⁵⁹ It has been posited that state power experienced a long-term decline

48. Ebrey (1989, 1991a, pp. 68–73).

49. Chu (1993); Hauf (1996). Lineage communities were, however, a gradual development that gathered momentum during and after the mid-Ming dynasty (Faure 2007; Gerritsen 2007, chap. 9).

50. In the Southern Song dynasty there began to appear textbooks for beginners, such as *The Hundred Family Names* (*Baijia xing*), *Exhortations to Filial Piety* (*Quanxiao wen*), *Exhortations to Learning* (*Quanxue wen*), and *Exhortations Regarding Customs* (*Yusu wen*; Ge 2001, pp. 276–77; Wu 1989). Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals* (*Jiali*) was a widely used manual of standard liturgies for important events such as weddings, funerals, and ancestral rites (Ebrey 1989, p. 296). See Ebrey (1991b) for the English translation.

51. Childhood education was emphasized during the Song dynasty, and children’s textbooks appeared, such as Zhu Xi’s *What Children Must Know* (*Tongmeng xuzhi*) and Lü Benzhong’s *Advice for Children* (*Tongmeng xun*). See Bai (2005) and Elman and Woodside (1994) for Neo-Confucian childhood education.

52. Ebrey (1995).

53. Some Neo-Confucians established granaries and community estates (land, buildings, etc.) for the relief of the poor, as well as other forms of welfare (Dardess 1974; Li and Jiang 2000; Twitchett 1959; von Glahn 1993; Walton 1993).

54. By the Qing dynasty, the state, to strengthen its presence in villages and townships, established the *baojia* (policing system) and *lijia* (taxation system) alongside the gentry-led village communal organizations. To curtail the gentry’s all-encompassing influence in local communities, the gentry was excluded from *baojia* leadership (Hsiao 1960, p. 67).

55. Ebrey (1989, p. 283). See Ebrey (1993) for an analysis of Northern Song Confucians’ alarm at the popularity of Buddhist style funerals and how this led to state regulation of the use of Buddhist funeral rituals.

56. Kelleher (1989, p. 250), commenting on Zhu Xi’s endeavors, which this author thinks applies to the endeavors of most other Neo-Confucian scholars as well. See also Freedman (1958, 1966) for the evidence of sustained Confucian impact at the village level before the mid-twentieth century.

57. Taylor (1990); Thompson (1990).

58. Schirokauer and Hymes (1993, p. 3).

59. Rankin (1986).

in late imperial China due to the expansion and penetration of Neo-Confucian social practices.⁶⁰ However, I must point out that local voluntarism in the Southern Song, late Ming, and late Qing dynasties was quite differently generated. After first briefly examining the nature of late Ming and late Qing local voluntarism, we shall return to and focus on that of the Southern Song dynasty. In my opinion, late Qing local voluntarism originated as the Confucian gentry's response to social problems arising from the sharp decline of state power during and after the Taiping Rebellion.⁶¹ Late Ming voluntarism's most noteworthy advance developed out of intellectual movements that were part of the gentry-scholars' reactions to the increasingly rigid impositions of the Neo-Confucian enterprise and the intransigent despotism of the Ming state, which was at the same time greatly weakened and could barely cope with various burgeoning societal developments.⁶² Although the Ming intellectual movements arguably constituted a more radical attack on the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy than Luther's Wittenberg posting was on the Catholic church, they did not create a schism in the Neo-Confucian ecumene and did not undermine the Confucian-Legalist political framework consequentially or for the long term. Although the late Ming "society-making" dynamism was impressive in comparison with their European counterparts, Chinese society makers were decentralized and lacked autonomous political/military power to defend their interests and institutionalize their gains (see chapter 13).

Let us now explore the nature of local voluntarism during the Southern Song dynasty, which greatly shaped the roles and self-understanding of the Chinese gentry of later dynasties. As noted above, Southern Song local voluntarism arose out of Neo-Confucianism, which had originated in the Northern Song dynasty. In Southern Song Neo-Confucianism, voluntary activities were undertaken for the benefit of society less because there had been a loss of "faith in state activism"⁶³ than because of the conviction that a Confucianized society was the most effective foundation for a strong Confucian state.⁶⁴ Southern Song scholars valued state acceptance and support and were pleased to have the state participate in their projects.⁶⁵ Most Southern Song scholars who led local initiatives were also senior officials in government service or retired.

Likewise true of Southern Song voluntarism: while the elites were establishing local communities according to Neo-Confucian principles, forging a "public

60. Schirokauer and Hymes (1993); von Glahn (1993).

61. The gentry, for instance, had taken upon itself the task of organizing of local militias, as the Qing government was unable to provide public security in the areas affected by the Taiping Rebellion (Elvin 1996, pp. 141–42; Kuhn 1970).

62. To these societal developments the historian Timothy Brook (2005, p. 8) has given the label "society-making."

63. P. Smith (2003, p. 21); von Glahn (1993, p. 221).

64. Bol (2003, p. 41).

65. According to Yu (2004, pp. 409–57), scholars as different as Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan greatly admired the relationship between Emperor Shen (r. 1068–1085) and Wang Anshi and longed for an emperor who could support them in putting their political programs into practice.

space” independent of the state was neither their intention, nor the reality. The Zheng communal family, a Neo-Confucianism-inspired family commune lasting more than fifteen generations across a 350-year span (from the Southern Song dynasty through the Ming dynasty), even had family rules requiring its members to establish a close relationship with government officials and to acquire firsthand knowledge of government functions and operations.⁶⁶ Zhu Xi once declared that “The relationship between minister and emperor is like that between son and father. Wherever the emperor points, the minister must follow without question. This is the *unchanging* principle of past and present.”⁶⁷ Zhu led in the making of Southern Song Neo-Confucian society. His statement summarizes the ideological underpinnings of the participants in voluntarism very well.

Notwithstanding that the Neo-Confucian scholars did not intend to create a “public space” that was independent of the state, the lineage organizations and academies they helped to create were “local” and “self-organizing” in the sense that the government did not directly participate in their routine operations. To be sure, the self-organizing activities of the local gentry frequently had results unintended by the earlier Neo-Confucians who had conceived of these institutions.⁶⁸ The history of late imperial China contains ample instances of certain gentry perverting the purposes of these institutions for their own benefit, and of the state’s responses to their actions.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, neither local initiatives nor private perniciousness fully support the thesis of the decline of state power. Premodern empires were severely constrained by their limited capacity to penetrate local society and therefore had to rely on indirect rule and local initiatives.⁷⁰ The Northern Song government under the stewardship of Wang Anshi (1021–1086) had tried to implement reforms aimed at some kind of direct rule over local society. The lack of infrastructural hardware to effectively implement the reform measures was one of the conditions that rendered the reform an utter failure.⁷¹ The goals of the Southern Song Confucians were in many ways similar to the goals of Wang Anshi, except that the Confucians turned to local initiatives.⁷² That the Southern Song gentry pursued a voluntary approach in no way negates the fact that these people read the same texts, held similar values,

66. Dardess (1974, p. 32).

67. Wei (2003, p. 800).

68. McDermott (1999, pp. 328–29).

69. Chang (1955, pp. 53–56); Chü (1962, pp. 185–90); Hsiao (1960, pp. 124–39, 175–79).

70. Crown (1974); Engels (1978); Mann (1986, chap. 5).

71. See H. Li (2004, pp. 517–21) for a summary of the literature that analyzes the failure of Wang’s reform. That literature, however, fails to point out that only a state with modern bureaucracy and the infrastructural capacity of a modern nation state could implement some of Wang’s most important reform measures. Wang’s program was strongly utopian.

72. It has been argued that the Neo-Confucian private academy paralleled Wang Anshi’s government schools, that the community granaries were an alternative to Wang’s Green Sprouts program of farm loans, and that the community compact transformed Wang’s *baojia* system of top-down local surveillance into a voluntary communal contract. See Bol (1993); Schirokauer and Hymes (1993, pp. 16–23); and von Glahn (1993).

and, in many cases, even experienced similar life courses as government officials. The local communities under their leadership had a certain autonomy but were loyal to the state. They provided many services that could not be delivered by a pre-modern state with limited infrastructural capacity.⁷³ Their existence allowed the Chinese state to exercise local control without much expansion of the bureaucracy at a time when the population was increasing quickly and commercialization and urbanization were gaining momentum.⁷⁴ Earlier scholars have tended to see the governments of Song and post-Song China as weak and incapable of penetrating local Chinese society.⁷⁵ This view, though not unfounded, misses an important point: the state's limited infrastructure was compensated for by the self-organizing lineage communities led by the scholar-gentry who shared the mentality and values of government officials.⁷⁶ This was doubtless the greatest possible achievement for a premodern empire with an insufficient infrastructure.⁷⁷

Finally, although the lineage communities and private academies established by the Neo-Confucians were self-governing, they had neither legally granted autonomy nor the power to defend their interests. Their activities could be easily overseen or overridden by the state.⁷⁸ Soon after Zhu Xi's death in 1200, the state elevated his teaching to canonical status. In 1313, under Mongol rule, the Four Books that Zhu Xi had endorsed, along with his commentaries on those works, were designated standard texts for the civil-service examination.⁷⁹ When Zhu Xi's teaching was promoted to the level of state ideology, the state adopted only Zhu's Confucian curriculum and sponsored Neo-Confucian social programs;

73. Chang (1955, pp. 51–70); Chü (1962, chap. 10).

74. For instance, in both the Song and Qing dynasties, the bureaucracy numbered approximately 20,000, even though the Chinese population had increased fourfold, from 100 million in the late twelfth century to 400 million in early nineteenth century (Zhao and Xie 1988).

75. Skinner (1977, p. 21) concludes that "a unified empire could be maintained on into the late imperial era only by systematically reducing the scope of basic-level administrative functions and countenancing a decline in the effectiveness of a bureaucratic government within local systems." Other scholars have also made similar assertions (e.g., Hartwell 1982; Rankin 1986; Schirokauer and Hymes 1993, pp. 1–58; Skocpol 1979).

76. Elman (1990, pp. 16–26) reached a similar conclusion in his analysis of the relationships among gentry, the lineage organizations, and the state in the Ming dynasty. According to Elman, the gentry were both "state servants and local leaders" (p. 16). The local lineages under their leadership "were a strong force for stabilizing rural society below the county magistrate's jurisdiction and thus facilitated the work of local officials . . . Lineages were "unofficial auxiliaries for the state at or below the county level" (pp. 25–26). Wong (1997, p. 117) asserts that "in the realms of material welfare and moral indoctrination the state and local elites shared an agenda, which, during the eighteenth century, was implemented throughout the agrarian empire through a mix of official and elite efforts coordinated, if not fully controlled, by the central state through vertically integrated reporting procedures." Faure (1999) and McDermott (1999) have made essentially the same point in their analyses of the formation and development of local village rituals and community pacts and of the roles that local gentry and state ideologies played in the process.

77. It must be stressed that, although the Chinese state cannot be characterized simply as weak, it was not development-oriented either. Like all premodern states, the Chinese state was maintenance-oriented rather than goal-oriented (Schram 1987).

78. In 1195, Zhu Xi and his disciples became embroiled in a factional struggle within the government. When Zhu's faction lost imperial favor, his teaching was labeled "false learning" and officially denounced, a censure that was not reversed before Zhu's death (de Bary 1981, part 1; Schirokauer 1975).

79. This status was retained through the Ming and Qing dynasties until the abolishment of the civil-service examination in the final years of the Qing dynasty.

Zhu's metaphysics remained largely a private intellectual interest. Ironically, though Zhu Xi firmly opposed learning just for the purpose of passing the examinations, later scholars followed his curriculum for just that purpose. At the same time, as the Song scholars had hoped, Neo-Confucianism did penetrate much more deeply into society, albeit in a more rigid and repressive manner than Zhu Xi and his contemporaries had ever envisioned.

THE CONFUCIAN SOCIETY AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The creation of a Confucian society, however, did not diminish the strong presence of numerous religions and other traditions in China. Buddhism and Daoism were still regarded by the rulers and by most Confucian scholars as useful teachings and tolerated and patronized as such.⁸⁰ The mindset of the ordinary Chinese was likewise eclectic. It was more than common for an average Chinese person to observe Confucian ethics, pray to Buddha, and hire a Daoist priest for certain ritual services, without being bothered by the inconsistencies among these teachings. A noticeable development in Song China was the growing significance of what might be called "popular religion" that went hand in hand with the ascendance of Neo-Confucianism.⁸¹ Chinese popular religion has been defined in contrast to the "elite" religion or "big tradition" (i.e., Confucianism and Buddhism). It has been labeled in all its forms "local religion,"⁸² "folk religion," "religion of the common people,"⁸³ or "small tradition."⁸⁴ Popular religion has also been seen as a kind of diffused religion, in the sense that its theology, rituals, and organizations were intimately merged with (and often subordinated to) the concepts and structures of the institutions and practices of daily life.⁸⁵ Chinese popular religion takes numerous forms and is highly mutable.⁸⁶ It defies any neat definition.⁸⁷

80. The rulers of China had tried to come to terms with Buddhism (and Daoism) ever since the later part of the Age of Disunion. In the Southern Song dynasty, the imperial attitude toward the Three Teachings crystallized and can best be illustrated by the following statement of Emperor Xiao (r.1163–1189): "Buddhist teaching is good for mental cultivation, Daoist teaching is good for having a healthy body, and Confucianism is good for the management of the world" (Yu 2004, p. 67). See Gregory and Getz (1999) for the development of Buddhism in the Neo-Confucian environment of the Song dynasty. See Brook (1993) for the gentry's sponsorship of Buddhism in Ming China. Islam, too, was tolerated and patronized by the rulers of late imperial China (Yu 1996); shamanism had persisted in Chinese society and formed an important part of the court ritual in the history of China until the late Qing dynasty (Di Cosmo 1999b).

81. Ebrey and Gregory (1993); Hansen (1990); Hymes (2002); Pi (2008); von Glahn (2004); ter Haar (1998).

82. Lagerwey (2004); Overmyer (2009).

83. D. Johnson (1995, p. viii); Poo (1998).

84. Sangren (1984).

85. Overmyer (1986, pp. 51–54).

86. D. Johnson (1995, p. viii) argues insightfully that "a leading characteristic of 'popular religion' in China was its diversity, its seemingly endless local variations."

87. A popular religion might be followed only by the "local" people of one to a few villages or by the practitioners of a particular trade, but it might also draw followers from several counties or even provinces. Although most varieties of popular religion could be seen as "religious beliefs of the common people," it was not uncommon for some popular religions to attract a significant number of the local elite. Finally, though most kinds of popular religion closely fit the definition of a diffused religion, they could also take forms closer to an institutional religion,

In the following discussion, I include in the rubric of popular religion all the native Chinese religions that are more or less influenced by, but not within the traditions of, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism.

The widespread presence of popular religions puzzled many early Western observers of China.⁸⁸ Fettered by a Christian-centric understanding of religion, they saw the Chinese as either essentially secular via Confucianism⁸⁹ or incredibly superstitious via the more miracle-oriented popular religions and Daoism.⁹⁰ Notwithstanding the multiple biases in the Christian-centric understanding of religion, Westerners could not doubt the importance of popular religions in China. This posed a puzzle: local religions declined in other major civilizations after the rise of the world religions; why did they flourish in China despite the presence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism?

In my view, the answer lies in the nature of Confucianism and its social practices. The extremely diverse and localized Chinese popular religions represented a more pristine state of religious development, in the sense that religious imaginations at their inception were intimately bounded by people's local experiences.⁹¹ In most parts of the world local religious traditions were mostly seriously weakened after one local religion became dominant to the point that it marshaled enough resources to establish its own organizations, construct a successful translocal theology and identity,⁹² and wield sufficient political and military power to push other local religions to the margins. Moreover, when an exclusive (or even monolithic) local religion became dominant, its believers would perceive the followers of other local religions as "pagans," try to convert or simply eliminate them, and then jealously guard their own orthodoxy against heresies.⁹³ China was different because of Confucianism. Confucianism embodied the pragmatic Chinese mentality shared by all major Chinese intellectual traditions (see chapters 7 and 10). Though its focus was on this-world ethics, it incorporated many religious elements from ancient China, such as

defined by Yang (1961, p. 20) as a religion with a system of theology, rituals, and organization of its own. See also Shahar and Weller (1996) for a glimpse of a wide variety of Chinese popular religions.

88. Eastman (1988); D. Johnson (1995); Smith (1974).

89. Bodde (1946); Weber (1951).

90. Weber (1951, p. 200), for example, argued that Daoism "knew no 'ethos' of its own; magic, not conduct, was decisive for man's fate."

91. Durkheim (1995). See also chapters 1 and 6 for more theoretical discussions of the nature of ideological power.

92. For example, faith becomes the primary basis of Christian identity after the popularization of St. Paul's dictum "justification by faith."

93. Overmyer (1976, pp. 63–65) argues that due to "the absence of a strong central power" medieval European heresies had a more favorable environment than the Chinese Buddhist sects that he has studied. This cannot be so. Even though heresies (such as Paulicians, Bogomils, and Cathars) in medieval Europe were mostly just alternative interpretations of the Christian faith, they were subject to constant purges by the Church (Erbstößer 1984; Lambert 1992; Leff 1967; Russell 1971). By contrast, many varieties of popular religion or Buddhist sects were hardly mere extensions of Confucianism. In European parlance, they belonged to paganisms or sorceries. Nevertheless, in China they flourished instead of being stamped out.

ancestor worship, a supernatural concept of heaven, divination, predetermination, and yin-yang cosmology.⁹⁴ Since these elements were also the basic ingredients of Chinese popular religion, they provided legitimacy for its development. Moreover, the hegemonic status of Confucianism curtailed the power of Buddhism and Daoism and prevented mainstream Buddhist and Daoist establishments from using coercive measures against popular religion. Thus was created a niche for the growth and spread of different kinds of popular religion, sometimes even at the expense of Buddhism and Daoism.⁹⁵

To foster Confucian values, the pragmatic Chinese state, instead of trying to eradicate popular religion, made efforts to co-opt it. Beginning in the Song dynasty the state started regularly granting titles to local gods of popular religions,⁹⁶ most of whom were renowned officials or local heroes prior to their apotheoses. Through the promotion and demotion of local deities, the state declared its command of the celestial world and delimited popular religion through Confucian values. At the same time, such state actions further legitimized popular religion and raised its status in society.

The nature of the Confucian state and its actions were not the only contributors to the significant presence of popular religion. In Song China, commercialism and urban life underwent rapid development. A more complex society entailed more diversified functional gods for protection and guidance,⁹⁷ and more money was available to be siphoned off by local religious specialists and local festivals.⁹⁸ New aspects of society in Song China introduced new kinds of miracles into popular religion: bringing luck to an examination candidate, protecting sea travelers, making one's business profitable, and so on. The new gods who could perform such miracles became popular, while some other deities, now no longer so important to people, fell into desuetude.⁹⁹

Chinese popular religion did not possess the degree of translocal identity and organizational strength of Buddhism and Daoism. But China's popular religions had one advantage that the latter religions did not have: their great mutability. The locally based "popular" religions of other civilizations lacked this advantage

94. These are the common religious foundations in China that had existed ever since the Warring States period if not earlier (Harper 1995). See also Eastman (1988, p. 41); Smith (1968, chap. 3); Thompson (1989, chaps. 3–5).

95. Major popular religious sects of the Ming dynasty included White Lotus (*bailianjiao*), Luo Teaching (*luojiao*), Yellow Sky (*huangtianjiao*), Red Sun (*hongyangjiao*), and Fragrant Incense (*wenxiangjiao*; Nan and He 2006, pp. 318–27).

96. The state appointment of the local gods was largely based on the following criteria: the apotheosized must be portrayed as having impeccable morality and as a benefactor of the local communities by the miracles s/he was able to perform (Hansen 1990, pp. 88–89). Should a god acquire a reputation for failing to perform miracles as expected, the state, supposedly, would rescind the granted titles, and worshippers would soon neglect that god. On the other hand, many local interests had a say in the title-granting process. The reality was, understandably, messy.

97. The number of gods increased with the growing division of labor in Chinese society, because each trade had gods that performed trade-specific miracles.

98. Katz (1995, p. 23).

99. Hansen (1990); Katz (1995, pp. 22–32).

because under the relentless purges and the encroachment of the dominant institutional religion, they could not survive long enough to undergo changes. But when popular religion was protected from the dominant institutional religions, as was the case in China, the advantage of mutability was fully realized—popular religion could freely borrow elements of Buddhism and Daoism to form new cults or sects that might even attract adherents of Buddhism and Daoism.¹⁰⁰ This was particularly true for Daoism.¹⁰¹ Daoism had, in fact, originated as a kind of Chinese popular religion, its teachings closely entwined with divers elements of China's everyday religious life.¹⁰² This made it easier for popular religion, in turn, to incorporate various elements of Daoism into local festivals and popular religious rituals without losing its key characteristics.¹⁰³

Notwithstanding these statements to the contrary, the Chinese state did restrict or repress the activities of popular religion, with varying degrees of intensity over time. Although the history of repression is very complicated, the following patterns are clear: first, the state wanted all religions to accept Confucian orthodoxy,¹⁰⁴ and it punished major violations;¹⁰⁵ second, the state banned those sects or cults that worshiped ethically problematic gods or practiced unethical rituals as judged by Confucian morals;¹⁰⁶ third, the state repressed sects or cults that showed signs of turning or having turned political and becoming sources of social unrest.¹⁰⁷ Eradicating non-Confucian teachings, as European

100. Hansen (1990); Overmyer (1976). For instance, in the Three-in-One Cult developed by Lin Zhao'en (1517–1598), Avalokitesvara (*Guanyin*), Maitreya (*Mile*), Laozi, Confucius, and deities from other traditions were all turned into deities and worshipped (Berling 1980; Dean 1998).

101. But the same is also, to a lesser extent, true for Buddhism. As Zürcher (1982, p. 173) has insightfully noted, "[A]s soon as we go below that top level, quite another picture emerges, in which Buddhism loses much of its sharp contour, as it is absorbed into the surrounding mass of Chinese indigenous religion." See Overmyer (1976) and ter Haar (1999) for the analysis of the White Lotus and other sectarian Buddhist movements in China.

102. Dean (1998); Hymes (2002); Sangren (1987); Schipper (1993); Stein (1979); Welch and Seidel (1979). See also Lagerwey (2004) for an excellent collection of recent studies on the intimate relationships between Daoism and popular religion.

103. Popular religion was able freely to incorporate Daoist elements into its religious activities, whereas the structuring effect of Daoism on popular religion might not have been as strong as Schipper (1993) and Dean (1993) have suggested. Daoism did not possess any coercive power over popular religion. It was also not the only religious tradition that popular religion could learn from. In fact, Chinese popular religion had a strong structuring effect upon Daoism. In comparison with Buddhism, Daoism did not have strong institutional outlets among the populace. This compelled the Daoists working at the grassroots level to adopt various elements of local popular religion to stay relevant.

104. According to Clart (2003), many rituals and practices that are commonly practiced by different popular religious groups in contemporary mainland China and Taiwan can easily be identified as Confucian.

105. For example, in 1106, Emperor Hui of the Northern Song dynasty ordered a stop to the rather common practice of placing Buddha, Laozi, and Confucius on the same altar in temples and monasteries. Similar state regulations were enacted in later dynasties (Yang 1961, pp. 197–98). See also Overmyer (1976) for the persecutions that the imperial Chinese state visited upon popular sects whose practices challenged state ideology.

106. Yang's (1961, pp. 194–96) book contains a lengthy translation of a Qing dynasty decree that in many ways defined what the Qing rulers saw as tolerable religions and as punishable heresies. The Song dynasty was a more "liberal" era in China, but as Ge (2001, pp. 258–66) has illustrated, the Song state tried very hard to suppress the kind of popular religion comprising undesirable teachings and rituals (such as human sacrifice and sexual promiscuity in rituals). In 1111, in Kaifeng prefecture alone, a total of 1,038 popular religion temples were deemed illegal and torn down by the state, an indication of the Song state's great effort to regulate popular religion.

107. Naquin (1981); Overmyer (1976); Perry (2002, pp. 76–107); ter Haar (1999).

Christian states tried to do with unbelievers and heretics, was never the intention of the Chinese state. No inquisition and no religious wars of any significance occurred in China.

The state's firm regulatory policy toward religions forced/induced Buddhism and Daoism to preach filial piety and pay homage to the secular rulers¹⁰⁸ and various kinds of popular religion to adopt Confucian morals and support Confucian ethics in their ritual and festive activities.¹⁰⁹ Although this Confucianization of Chinese religion was neither systematic nor thorough, the political dominance of Confucianism over the various religions was beyond doubt.¹¹⁰

SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on two crucial developments in Song China—the rise of Neo-Confucianism and the expansion of the civil-service examination. These developments led to the disappearance of the “great family” aristocratic tradition, the sustained dominance of civilian officials selected for merit in politics, the emergence of a Confucian gentry class, the development of a Confucianized and pluralistic religious ecology, and most importantly, the penetration of Confucian ideology and institutions into local society and people's daily lives. Together, they contributed to the perpetuation of the Confucian-Legalist political system in China until, in the nineteenth century, China was compelled to embark on a “modernization project” under the pressure of the Western imperialism.

108. Ch'en (1973); Teiser (1988); Yang (1957, p. 280).

109. Kleeman (1993) has given an account of how Zitong, a popular religion/Daoist deity who originated in Sichuan, was gradually transformed into Wenchang, the god of literature and patron deity for civil-service examination candidates, during the Song dynasty. See also Yang (1961, chap. 11) for his analysis of the dominance of Confucian values in popular religion.

110. Although I stress Confucian dominance and the government regulation of religions, I do not endorse the bureaucratic model of Chinese popular religion, which defines the structure and mentality of the Chinese religious system as a reflection of the structure and ideology of the Chinese state (e.g., Feuchtwang 1974, 2001; Lagerwey 1987; Wolf 1974, pp. 131–82). Religious imagination cannot but be heavily influenced by dominant secular political structure and mentality; still, such an influence cannot be total. Relationships within the state or between the state and its subjects are not the only relationships in Chinese society (Hymes 2002). Many popular cults and sects adopted social relationships and values that, being censured by the state as “un-Confucian,” had interstitially existed in the society (Shahar and Weller 1996). China's premodern religious ecology was too complicated to fit into one or two neat models.

Market Economy under the Confucian-Legalist State

More than a few cardinal intellectual innovations (Neo-Confucianism, the concomitant civil-service examinations, the burgeoning of printing and publishing) transfigured China during the Song dynasty. That was also the time when China experienced dramatic advances in agriculture, industry, commerce, finance, urbanization, science, and technology.¹ After the Song dynasty, although technological development slowed, until the nineteenth century China still “led” the world most of the time in commercialization, urbanization, and standard of living. But although “China came within a hair’s breadth of industrializing in the fourteenth century” according to Eric Jones,² industrial capitalism began in Europe rather than in China. Why?

Scholars have tried to answer this question from numerous perspectives, but the whole literature tends to miss larger pictures while producing increasing numbers of separate facts. This oversight speaks to the nature of late twentieth-century Western social sciences, which are mechanistic, ideological, and fragmented. Scholars of different camps reply to the question by citing resources and mechanisms that are reflective of their training and ideological convictions.³ Yet they seldom ask the question: Are the elements a particular scholar regards as significant necessary or sufficient to explain why industrial capitalism emerged in Europe and not in China? What configurations of all the plausible elements can provide answers to the question? Might these elements have a hierarchical relationship, meaning that their effect and their relative significance are shaped by higher-order sociopolitical conditions?

1. The Song dynasty produced Shen Kuo (1031–1095), the greatest scientist in the history of China. Song China also experienced China’s last surge of technological invention, including of movable-type printing and the compass, and the widespread use of gunpowder in warfare.

2. Jones (1981, p. 160).

3. Blaut (2000, pp. 200–202), for instance, has listed thirty elements that are cited to account for the “European success.” The number thirty is not, however, exact because some of these elements can be combined, and a few others are missing from the list. But the list does remind us of the complexity of the question and shows how easy it has been for scholars to assemble some of these elements into logically plausible but empirically irrelevant arguments to explain the “European success.”

Let me now spell out the central argument of this chapter: Late imperial China's economy, highly commercialized though it was, offered no opportunity for the development of industrial capitalism in China. This is not because China had an insupportably large population or a degenerating natural environment, poor resources and primitive technologies, development-unfriendly modes of production, problematic class or gender relations, or an unfavorable position in the world system. Rather, it was in the nature of the Confucian-Legalist state to turn its back on industrial capitalism. True, some of the foregoing conditions also had a negative impact on late imperial China's economy, but the very existence and the significance of these conditions were shaped by a *higher-order* structural condition—China's ideological/political system (or the nature of the Confucian-Legalist state). At the height of the Ming and Qing dynasties, for example, commerce flourished, and the people in the more prosperous parts of China enjoyed high living standards. But China was still a place where technological innovation was not rewarded, theoretical-formal rationalities were underdeveloped, the Confucian-Legalist political system faced no major challenges, and, most detrimentally, merchants were unable to use their wealth to muster political, military, and ideological strength sufficient to counterbalance the state negativity. Late imperial China's flourishing commercialism was, therefore, not sustained by the weakening of the Neo-Confucian ecumene or by the enrichment and empowerment of the bourgeoisie, as in Europe, but by the empire's huge market (afforded by its vast territory and population) and by the peace resulting from long-lasting mid-dynasty political stability. When the Europeans arrived in China with modern weapons in the nineteenth century, China was not moving toward an industrial revolution but rather undergoing another dynastic decline. Before the arrival of the West, China was developing according to its own distinctive temporality. It did not develop into, but rather was dragged into, the age of industrialization and modernity by the forces of Western and Japanese imperialism.

This chapter comprises three sections. The first summarizes the old and new theories on "the rise of the West" question, and the second offers a critique of the new scholarship on that question. The third section addresses the question of why China could not have experienced indigenous development of industrial capitalism without the arrival of the West.

Once again, I do not regard industrial capitalism as good or bad, or assert that China in the eighteenth century was backward (or advanced) compared with Western Europe. Words such as "success," "failure," "development," "achievement," and "breakthrough" carry no positive or negative connotations as they are used in this chapter, and I would happily rewrite "China's failure to successfully achieve industrial capitalism" as "China's success in repressing the elements of industrial capitalism," if it would avoid the occurrence of bias. The following

analysis is intended only to tell that Western Europe and China were vastly different and developing according to their distinctive temporalities before the rise and spread of industrial capitalism.

“THE RISE OF THE WEST” DEBATE

In the fields of history and historical sociology “the rise of the West,” referring to the West’s political, military, economic, and ideological dominance over the rest of world since the mid-nineteenth century, has been a topic of continuous speculation. In this long tradition of scholarship, China has always been used as a comparison. The theories that attempt to explain “the great divergence,” or China’s “failure” to experience an indigenous breakthrough to industrialization and modernity versus the West’s achievement of just such breakthrough in the nineteenth century fall roughly into two broad categories. The first, which has been labeled “Eurocentric” and “teleological,” explains the great East-West divergence as rooted in their distinctive structures and cultures, which had taken shape long before the eighteenth century. Most scholars who fall into this category also view the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties) as crucial in China’s developmental trajectory,⁴ after which the Chinese economy gradually fell into “a high-level equilibrium trap,”⁵ technological development slowed,⁶ and the political system, land ownership and class relations,⁷ and culture became increasingly incapable of accommodating a highly commercialized economy and an expanding population. As China stagnated, an initially more primitive Europe recovered during the High Middle Ages and the Renaissance; caught up to China in the sixteenth century, first in its military and state structures, then in the achievements of religion, secular ideology, and science, and then in technology and the economy; and finally, in the nineteenth-century, achieved the breakthrough.

This analysis is criticized by another group of scholars known as “the California school.”⁸ Because their explanations of the great divergence differ greatly, it is hard to summarize them,⁹ but they more or less share the following

4. Elvin (1973, 1984); Jones (1981); Landes (2006); McNeill (1982); Reischauer and Fairbank (1960); and Skinner (1977), to mention just a few.

5. Elvin (1973).

6. Landes (1998); Mokyr (1990, chap. 9).

7. Deng (2003, p. 496).

8. See, for example, Abu-Lughod (1989); Blaut (1993); Frank (1998, 2001); Goldstone (2000, 2008); Goody (1996, 2004); Pomeranz (2000, p. 206). Not all scholars can be classified under these two traditions. Wallerstein (1979, 1999), for example, asserts that capitalism arose in the aftermath of the feudal crisis in the sixteenth century with the emergence of a modern world system—an assertion that downplays the importance of the Industrial Revolution to the rise of the West.

9. See Frank (2001) and Goldstone (2000) for reviews of the California school arguments.

convictions: First, it was China and the Middle East, not Europe, that dominated the world both economically and technologically throughout most of the second millennium. Second, the Eurasian civilizations were closely interlinked, and all the major Eurasian civilizations developed at a similar pace before the rise of the West. Third, external conditions and historical contingencies, as well as economic and demographic mechanisms, figured more importantly than macro structural conditions and human agencies in the rise of the West. Fourth, industrial capitalism arose in the West at a critical historical juncture. For example, Blaut states that no major institutional or cultural differences divided Europe from Asia and that capitalism slowly emerged prior to 1492 in many parts of the world. Europe took the lead only because it was geographically much closer than were the other continents to the New World.¹⁰ Abu-Lughod and Frank also attempted to show that the Industrial Revolution started in the West only because the economy of the East was in temporary disarray at the wrong moment.¹¹ Goldstone claims that the major Eurasian civilizations all developed at a similar pace before the mid-seventeenth century, after which development gave way to conservatism in the whole of Eurasia. Only England (again according to Goldstone) forged ahead of the rest of the states, East and West, because, earlier than all the rest, it developed a pluralistic political system and a Newtonian culture essential for the rise of the industrial capitalism.¹²

The most highly acclaimed recent study to come out of the California school is Pomeranz's book, which asks why the Industrial Revolution happened in England rather than in Jiangnan (in the Yangzi Delta, China's most developed region) in the nineteenth century. According to Pomeranz, England and Jiangnan were on the same path of development, as is reflected in their striking similarities up to the mid-eighteenth century, ranging from the standard of living (consumption of calories, household goods, and textiles; the ability to store and distribute grain for famine relief, etc.) to the level of commercialization and division of labor in agriculture and in the handicraft industry, and to their populations' longevity. Both regions also faced similar serious constraints in the form of rising populations and limited resources, and therefore neither was necessarily on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution.¹³ The Industrial Revolution happened in England only because it was favored by two external contingencies: England's coal deposits were fortuitously located near potential industrial users, and England was able to extract large amounts of resources from its overseas colonies, an option China did not have.

10. Blaut (1993, chap. 4).

11. Abu-Lughod (1989); Frank (1998). Frank, for example, locates the divergence much later, about the mid-eighteenth century.

12. Goldstone (2000, 2008).

13. Pomeranz (2000, p. 206).

A CRITIQUE OF THE CALIFORNIA SCHOOL

My critical assessment of “non-Eurocentric” scholarship is drawn largely from Pomeranz’s work. The new California scholarship has provided a few insights scanted in the traditional analysis of “the great divergence,” but it has mistakenly rejected the following “Eurocentric” argument: China had little chance for an indigenous breakthrough to industrial capitalism, whether in the nineteenth century or any time before or immediately after it. Moreover, “the great divergence” in China started with the rise to dominance of the Confucian-Legalist state, long before the fourteenth-century turning point espoused by Eric Jones and some other “Eurocentric” scholars.

The new scholarship emphasizes that the rise of the West and European dominance was only a fleeting moment in world history, and that other regions soon caught up. Eurocentric scholars certainly would not object to this point. Weber, for example, argues very straightforwardly that although Confucian culture prevented industrial capitalism from taking root in China, the same culture was entirely capable of adopting a modern market economy.¹⁴ In fact, Western imperialism had linked industrial capitalism with such international aggressiveness that, once England had achieved it, the rest of the world had to adopt it or face elimination.¹⁵ Only under the brutal isomorphic pressure of Western imperialism were many non-Western countries compelled to modify or even discard their traditional cultures and institutions and embark on industrialization programs, with a few “lucky” ones seeming to have caught up with the West in “a fleeting moment in world history.”¹⁶

In the traditional scholarship, industrial capitalism in Europe is taken as a given, from which scholars trace back to the conditions leading to Europe’s “success” and China’s “failure.” This kind of reasoning, when exercised without caution, often leads to portraying the relationship between the structural conditions and developmental patterns of a society as linear and/or deterministic. Pomeranz, to the contrary, concludes that “no part of the world was necessarily headed for an industrial breakthrough” in the eighteenth century.¹⁷ Such a

14. Weber (1951, p. 248) reads, “The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism which has technically and economically been fully developed in the modern cultural era. It is obviously not a question of deeming the Chinese ‘naturally ungifted’ for the demands of capitalism. But compared to the Occident, the varied conditions which externally favored the origin of capitalism in China did not suffice to create it.” The rapid development of the Chinese economy after the 1978 market-oriented reform confirms this Weberian insight.

15. We need only to recall how, between the late nineteenth and early-to mid-twentieth century, people in almost every non-Western country, in order to maintain their independence and strengthen their nation, had tried to introduce capitalism and its derivative values and ideas (including Marxism) to their own country.

16. Although China’s speedy economic gain may be seen as “a fleeting moment in world history” to non-Eurocentric scholars, to the Chinese who lived through this “fleeting moment,” it encompassed foreign invasions, humiliation, disorientation, confusion, ideological schism, rebellion, revolution, famine, fanaticism, and human suffering and death on a massive scale. In other words, the barrier to rapid post-Mao economic development, even for a region such as Jiangnan, might be higher than B. Li (2008) has suggested.

17. Pomeranz (2000, p. 206). A similar assertion was also made by Wong (1997).

shift in thinking creates both insights and fallacies. Largely owing to this new thinking and associated analyses, we have now fully realized that the birth of the Industrial Revolution in a particular place and time—England in the nineteenth century—was not as overdetermined as traditional scholars have tended to portray it. On the other hand, this new thinking also gives the impression that China and England were on a common path of development, at the same rate and with similar constraints. They were not. True, the European breakthrough was not bound to happen in nineteenth-century England, but China could not possibly have created an Industrial Revolution—not in the nineteenth century or any time before then.

Recent scholars, especially Pomeranz, have generated a greater amount of systematic data showing that as late as the mid-eighteenth century, the most advanced parts of China and Europe were still largely similar in their economies and quality of life. Pomeranz's assessment of the eighteenth-century Chinese economy has been criticized by Huang,¹⁸ who, like Elvin, states that the economy of the Ming and Qing dynasties was held in check by a "Malthusian mechanism"—that is, by a diminishing marginal return per unit of labor, due to the sluggish development of labor-saving technologies, which, in turn, owed to the large population size and consequent low cost of labor.¹⁹ Huang's criticism is in some respects valid, but Pomeranz's general assertion that by the eighteenth century, Jiangnan's economy continued to experience "Smithian growth" (growth driven by greater division of labor and volume of trade) is to a great extent also valid and has been confirmed by the findings of leading Chinese economic historians who have studied similar questions for decades.²⁰

The Eurocentric argument originated in the nineteenth century with the notion of an energetic and dynamic West in dramatic contrast to the backward or stagnant "others" (China included). This notion has now been rejected even by scholars who believe that industrial capitalism was largely a product of European culture,²¹ but not many Western scholars before the publication of Pomeranz's book were so keenly aware of the extent of China's eighteenth-century prosperity. That prosperity forcefully refutes the traditional view of China as increasingly stagnant beginning with a presumed fourteenth-century turning point.²²

Pomeranz's work, however, gives the impression that the similarities he presents between England and Jiangnan prove that China and England were developing in the same direction at approximately the same time and that it was only

18. Huang (2002, 2003).

19. Huang (1990).

20. Jiang (1992); B. Li (1998, 2002, 2003); Xu and Wu (2000, 2003). Pomeranz's thesis regarding Jiangnan's eighteenth-century living standard and commercialism is also in line with the findings of Lee and Wang (1999, chap. 3) and Shih (1992).

21. Landes (2006); Mokyr (1999).

22. Elvin (1973).

because of a few lucky externalities—that is, the availability of the new world for the English people to migrate to and extract resources, and coal mines situated near regions experiencing industrialization—that England forged ahead. I disagree.

Although in the eighteenth century, Jiangnan and England had similar levels of economic development and quality of life, the conditions and institutions that had generated them were *very* different.²³ England's Industrial Revolution occurred in the context of a world-dominant navy and a bourgeoisie that enjoyed great political and ideological autonomy as well as highly institutionalized property rights. In England, at the turn of the nineteenth century, both theoretical-formal logic and privately oriented instrumental rationalism were becoming dominant modes of thinking among elites; furthermore, the sciences and technological inventions were valued and fostered in universities and in society at large. None of this obtained in China. China's repeated periods of economic prosperity resulted from the power of successive empires that mostly adopted a pragmatic attitude toward business activities and, moreover, were able to control their large populations and vast territories and to sustain prolonged *mid-dynasty prosperity*. Together, they propelled the Chinese economy to realize its great potential—again and again starting in the Song dynasty—under an imperial framework that nevertheless afforded no chance of breakthrough to industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century or at any other time in Chinese history.²⁴

Although both Confucianism and Legalism were averse to business activities and Chinese merchants lacked the political, ideological, and military autonomy (e.g., control of the armies of city-states and private armies of overseas companies and colonies) that their European counterparts had quite early acquired,²⁵ the eradication of handicrafts and trade was not the intention of the imperial state, nor did the state have the infrastructural capacity to eradicate them even

23. It is a rule rather than an exception that similar levels of economic prosperity can be reached in vastly different institutional and cultural settings. The economic histories of the Soviet Union and Communist China have shown that, during the early postwar reconstruction period, their planned economies performed as well as or better than market economies. Post–World War II Japan is a democracy, and China today is an authoritarian regime, but both have performed economic miracles. India and China could hardly be more different sociopolitically, but both have been engines of world economic development in the past decades. Nonetheless, though similar levels of economic development can be reached in different institutional and cultural settings, their long-term trajectories tend to be quite different.

24. Deng (2003, pp. 479–80) has noted that theories explaining China's decline all have a common problem, that is, they “cannot satisfactorily explain why China [flourished] in the first place.” It is unclear to me why an economy's flourishing and decline need follow the same logic and be explained by the same theory. China's strong state tradition, historical continuity, long-lasting dynasties, and pragmatic rationalism were all very conducive to economic and technological development, but given these conditions, China still did not develop toward industrial capitalism. More empathically even than Pomeranz, Deng (2003, p. 507) affirms that “[u]ntil the nineteenth century, the development ceiling had no severe negative impact on China.” Even if this were not an exaggeration, I would counter that the early modern Chinese economy, though highly advanced, had not advanced in the same direction as the European economy, and the path it took could not have led to a breakthrough to industrial capitalism.

25. As Kuhn (2009, p. 207) has rightly commented, “Throughout Chinese history, merchants have been regarded as both indispensable and disreputable” by the Chinese elite.

had it had the intention. Moreover, since in the Song dynasty commercial taxes had become a significant part of state revenue,²⁶ practical-minded members of the gentry increasingly participated in profit-making activities,²⁷ and the state even started to observe a certain degree of uninstitutionalized property rights in certain areas and to protect commercial activities under general state control.²⁸

The Chinese state and culture made allowances for market activity, but it was repeated mid-dynasty political stability beginning with the Song dynasty that allowed market relations to expand within an otherwise prejudicial cultural and political environment. Most of the major Chinese dynasties lasted for more than two centuries and encompassed a relatively stable mid-dynasty period of more than a century. During this period, the empire suffered fewer banditry activities and attempts at rebellion within and greatly expanded its territory and sphere of influence without; administration was routinized but not yet overly hidebound and corrupted; and the population had recovered from the death, famine, and epidemics brought about by interdynastic wars, but was not yet so large as to prevent the economy from experiencing a phase of Smithian growth.²⁹ Such mid-dynasty halcyon times had again and again produced highly prosperous and commercialized societies during the Northern Song, Southern Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Had there been a chance for an indigenous development of industrial capitalism in China, it would more likely have come to pass during the Song, rather than the Ming or Qing, dynasties, during which state politics became more repressive and culture became more conservative,³⁰ and technological innovation slowed greatly.³¹

Although the economic performances of eighteenth-century England and Jiangnan showed great similarities, they also differed considerably. Whereas the economy of Jiangnan advanced very quickly during the Ming and Qing dynasties, its major advance was in agriculture and consumer-goods production.³² Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, while England experienced huge progress in both technology and in the production of iron, construction materials, and machine tools, in Jiangnan, there were only minor changes in both productivity and technology.³³ England's Industrial Revolution was led by the invention and refinement of the steam engine and many other machine-tool technologies, the very sphere in which China lagged to such a degree that such inventions at that

26. Masatoshi (1984, p. 79).

27. Brook (1993).

28. Deng (2003); Feuerwerker (1984); Johnson (1993); Wong (1999, p. 226).

29. Rosenthal and Wong (2011) have made a similar argument on how late imperial China's economic development was facilitated by its large "political scale" (the spatial scale and population size of a polity).

30. Chow (1994); von Glahn (2003); Y. Wang (1995).

31. The traditional Eurocentric and the new revisionist scholarship are in agreement on this point. See, for example, Elman (2005); Goldstone (2008); Landes (1998); Mokyr (1990).

32. B. Li (2002, p. 92).

33. Most machine tools used during Ming and Qing still display Song technology (B. Li 2002, chap. 1).

time were impossible. The lack of coal deposits in Jiangnan, which has sometimes been cited as one cause of Jiangnan's arrested development, remains an implausible explanation; several Qing dynasty coal mines were actually accessible to Jiangnan via waterways.³⁴ If the Jiangnan economy had required coal, transportation would not have been an insoluble problem. We must distinguish, as I and some others do,³⁵ between market economy and industrial capitalism.

In my view, there are therefore no good reasons why China's eighteenth-century prosperity should have ended differently from the earlier periods of prosperity. In short, Pomeranz perceives in China's eighteenth-century prosperity a pattern of development similar to England's, whereas I see it as only a recurrence of the typical mid-dynasty prosperity, or the so-called prosperity of the Kangxi-Qianlong reigns.³⁶ Further confirming my perception, by the end of the eighteenth century—that is, in the final years of the Qianlong reign, or about a half century before the outbreak of the Opium War, which marked the arrival of Western imperialism—the Qing dynasty was already in decline, as indicated by the outbreak of the large-scale White Lotus Rebellion and other disorders typically associated with dynastic decline.³⁷ Although the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) adopted quasi-Christian teaching as its ideology, it was in essence one of the many peasant rebellions that spelled the further decline of the Qing dynasty. In summary, even without the arrival of the West, China's eighteenth-century prosperity was followed by a dynastic decline marked by endemic wars, famine, and epidemics during which much of the eighteenth century's economic gains were destroyed.³⁸

Comparing the possibility of breakthroughs to industrial capitalism in China and England based on economic and quality-of-life indices runs into the problem of economic determinism. Pomeranz amplifies this problem by the cases he chooses: rather than compare China with Europe or China with England, he compares Jiangnan (the richest region of China) and England (the most developed European state). By comparing a Chinese region with a European state, and focusing on the question of the great divergence, Pomeranz suggests that the nature and

34. Huang (2003, p. 164); B. Li (2002, p. 404).

35. Huang (1990, p. 5).

36. The Kangxi-Qianlong era lasted between 1661 and 1795. Between 1662 and 1795, China was ruled by three emperors, two of whom enjoyed extremely long reigns: Kangxi, Yongzheng (r. 1722–1735), and Qianlong.

37. Rowe (2009, pp. 88–89, 148). The White Lotus Rebellion broke out in 1794 in Sichuan, Hubei, and Shaanxi, and it took the Qing government about ten years to suppress it. Heterodox religions and large-scale rebellions were always problems for a declining Chinese dynasty, and the suppression of the rebellion, regardless of the outcome, only triggered further dynastic decline.

38. Arguing on the basis of some eighteenth-century economic and quality-of-life indices that China and England were developing in the same direction, at a similar pace, and under similar constraints, is comparable to arguing that two different mathematical functions are identical because the two functions reach the same value at a given point. My argument here is borne out by the development of cities in Europe and China. In Europe (England included), cities grew steadily and quickly increased in number after the thirteenth century (Bairoch 1988, pp. 153–56). In China, urbanization fluctuated at about the same level after the Northern Song dynasty.

patterned behavior of the state and the culture of the Chinese and European civilizations played no role in the economic process, which goes against almost every contemporary theory of economic development,³⁹ and it is easy to find flaws in his argument from various angles. For example, an implicit though crucial assumption of Pomeranz's book is that if Jiangnan could have been relieved of ecological pressures by colonization to some kind of "new world," Jiangnan's chances of industrial revolution would have greatly increased. But, Jiangnan was controlled by several administrative units, which were run by civilian officials, appointed by the Qing court, with only limited power. They could not make state-level policies and did not command an army that would have allowed them to venture into foreign territories, even had they been motivated to do so. In fact, Jiangnan was the most carefully controlled region in late imperial China, due to its vital importance to state revenue.⁴⁰ How could Jiangnan's administrative units have acted like the British government, venturing into some kind of new world?

What about demography? Huang saw late imperial China's high population as a major arresting factor for economic development,⁴¹ but Pomeranz rejected this view. The disagreement has produced a fierce debate.⁴² But population figures of Jiangnan and China varied greatly during the Ming and Qing dynasties. While arguing for his theory of the "high-level equilibrium trap," Elvin did not forget to mention that the Chinese population may have dropped between 35 percent and 40 percent during the Ming-Qing dynastic transition.⁴³ The population of Zhejiang, where a large part of Jiangnan is located, for example, was about eleven million 1393 but reached 23.6 million in 1630.⁴⁴ In 1644, however, the final year of the Ming dynasty, Zhejiang's population dropped to about twenty million. A few years later, the Manchus invaded Jiangnan, where they met serious resistance. In response, they staged massacres in many cities.⁴⁵ The killings and the ensuing epidemics lowered Zhejiang's population to seven million in 1661, according to one estimate.⁴⁶ Zhejiang's population rose to 22.4 million more than a century later, in 1776.⁴⁷ Such a drastic reduction of population in Zhejiang and the rest of China did not, however, trigger any major changes in

39. See Zhao and Hall (1994) for a review of the theories on economic development, especially the state-centered tradition.

40. Feng (2002).

41. Huang (1990, 2002).

42. See Pomeranz (2002, 2003) for his rebuttal of Huang (2002, 2003). Brenner and Isett (2002) also joined the debate.

43. Elvin (1973, p. 311).

44. Cao (2002a, pp. 240–41, 452).

45. See Dai (1982); Gu (1997); and Struve (1984) on the Chinese resistance and Manchu massacres in Jiangnan during the Ming-Qing transition.

46. Zhao and Xie (1988, p. 452).

47. Cao (2002b, p. 113). Ho's (1959) study of Ming-Qing demography was incorporated in Cao's work.

the mode of production, as happened in Western Europe after the Black Death in the fourteenth century,⁴⁸ nor did it stimulate the development of labor-saving technologies.⁴⁹

The role of population in economy is complicated. Population increase can trigger both Smithian and Malthusian mechanisms, with opposite economic effects,⁵⁰ and the impact of population on economy is mediated by other socio-political conditions. Thus the seemingly opposite arguments by Huang and Pomeranz are actually similar, for they both regard economic/demographic mechanisms as the most important factors behind the great divergence and only quibble about which economic/demographic mechanism was at work during that particular historical juncture. To understand the dynamic patterns of the Chinese economy by looking only at economic, demographic, and life-quality indices is to look too closely. Other factors could well have been more important to the great divergence.⁵¹

EXPLAINING THE “GREAT DIVERGENCE”

Let us turn to the question why, in China, an indigenous breakthrough to industrial capitalism was impossible before the nineteenth century. We will attempt an answer in two steps: by summarizing the key historical processes enabling the rise of industrial capitalism in the West, and by using European development as a comparative to China, which had maintained a sophisticated market economy ever since the Song dynasty but still was unable to create industrial capitalism.

The Key to the Rise of the West

Crucial to understanding my explanation of the rise of the West is the understanding of two concepts—market economy and industrial capitalism. In a market economy, a significant amount of goods is produced in anticipation of profits through exchange—an anticipation, with the concomitant hope of a better life, that is inherent in human nature. Therefore, a market economy will emerge wherever and whenever a society is able to yield a significant amount of surplus for exchange and the state lacks either the will or the capacity, or both, to limit

48. Anderson (1974); Brenner (1977, 1986).

49. The role of population in economy is complicated. Even if we exclude such issues as gender relations and labor quality, population increase can itself trigger both Smithian mechanism (population increase leads to further division of labor) and Malthusian mechanism (population increase produces cheaper labor and thus slows down the development of labor-saving technologies), with an opposite economic impact.

50. Boserup (1965, 1981).

51. Similar to my distinction between market economy and industrial capitalism, Huang (1990, p. 5) also clearly distinguishes between commercialization and capitalism and argues that commercialization may not inevitably lead to capitalist development.

commercial activities. When the productivity of a society increases, trade and profit-oriented production become important, thus the rise of market economy.⁵² A market economy emerged in China during the Eastern Zhou period (chapter 7), but it did not progress linearly. Rather, it remained at a given level during the Han dynasty, and then decreased due to the wars and chaos during most of the Age of Disunion (chapter 10). Late in the Age of Disunion, the importance of markets picked up again. From the Northern Song dynasty onward the Chinese economy remained highly commercialized, with only temporary disruptions by wars during dynastic transitions and by the early Ming dynasty's anti-market state policies.⁵³

Industrial capitalism differs from market economy: it refers to production rather than exchange and, specifically, to profit-making manufacturing by private enterprises using labor-saving machines as the dominant mode of production.⁵⁴ To make industrial capitalism possible, economic actors must cease to be insignificant in the society and must acquire the political, military, and ideological means to defend their interests; the state actors must have a great interest in making alliance with the economic actors for money and colonial expansion; and the society must envisage the significance of profit-motivated inventions, so that technologies crucial to the Industrial Revolution, such as the steam engine, coke smelter, spinning jenny, and like innovations will find inventors and adopters.⁵⁵ Industrial capitalism thus understood represents a major turning point in human history.

The rise of the West can also be explained as a concatenation of five overlapping historical processes: (1) a strong drive toward rationalization and cumulative development, propelled by incessant warfare and economic competition;⁵⁶ (2) the collapse of the Catholic ecumene and emergence of competing religious and secular ideologies in the wake of increasing state power; (3) the extension of bourgeois influence into the political, military, and ideological spheres; (4) a new political framework within which the state became stronger but at the same time was seriously constrained in its actions by the nonpolitical elite, especially the rising middle class; (5) the expansion of a state-merchant alliance, in which the state relied on merchants for money and colony management and the merchants depended on the state for protection and market expansion. Central to this

52. This definition bears no resemblance to Weber's (1981, pp. 334–47) notion of "irrational" versus "rational" capitalism but is close to Braudel's distinction between the "market economy" and "capitalism" (Braudel 1992).

53. For instance, maritime trade remained outlawed throughout most of the Ming dynasty, especially before 1567 (see Mielants 2007, p. 66).

54. Many scholars, from Max Weber (1951, 1958, 1981) to Braudel (1992), Finer (1997), Jones (1981), and Mann (1986), will in various degrees accept this view. I have, however, highlighted what seem to be the most significant historical forces promoting industrial capitalism and modernity, and have stressed "valuation of privately oriented instrumentalism" as key to their inception. This understanding of the causalities at work is, to a certain degree, new.

55. Degan (2008, pp. 17–33); Landes (1998); Mokyr (1990).

56. See chapter 1 for the natures of economic and military competition.

explanation are the natures of, and relationships among, the competing European elites. In other civilizations the elites competed for dominance, but the competition seldom disrupted the institutionalized elite relationships within the society. In Europe, however, the relationships among a very complex and diverse set of elites—governing political actors, the aristocracies, the bishops, and the bourgeoisie (who entered this exalted circle after the High Middle Ages)—had not been well institutionalized since the collapse of the Roman Empire.⁵⁷ Industrial capitalism (and the nation–state) stumbled into our path not as “historical progresses” but as unintended consequences of Europe’s never well-institutionalized elite competition and conflict, which again and again altered the power alignment of Europe’s elites and yielded room for the emergence of new elements conducive to the rise of industrial capitalism and nation-states. For brevity’s sake, as well as for the purpose of analogizing with events in China, the following account centers on only two of the just-mentioned five historical processes and their consequences: the rise of the bourgeoisie and the collapse of the Catholic ecumene.

Humans are capitalistic by nature, but three ideal-typical characteristics of amassing wealth have prevented humans from fully acting on their capitalist spirit in traditional societies. (1) Economic power is decentralized. It forms into multiple power centers and fosters people’s spatial movement in the society. This decentralization undermines the state’s capacity to control business activities and the people involved those activities (especially in a traditional society) and, at the same time, makes it harder for successful businessmen to create a strong, centralized, and coercive apparatus to defend their common interests. (2) The aim of ideal-typical economic actors is profit, in which privately oriented instrumental calculations figure largely. But privately oriented instrumental calculation (or rationality) was deemed selfish by all traditional religions and ideologies, and economic actors were hardly able to overcome morally based challenges.⁵⁸ (3) Economic power is also a developmental power. All types of power have a tendency to expand, but economic power in particular undermines, virus-like, the foundations of any maintenance-oriented traditional state. Therefore, few traditional rulers have any use for the merchant class, notwithstanding their own need for a well-stocked treasury.⁵⁹

57. Finer (1997, pp. 1473–75) expresses a similar view on this point.

58. Chinese merchants knew only too well that business-minded instrumental calculations and Confucian values were incompatible. A Song dynasty businessman, for example, told a Confucian scholar, “To get rich, one must first get rid of the five criminals, that is, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faithfulness. One will never get rich without doing away with these five criminals” (Jiang 2002, p. 367). The businessman’s “five criminals” were, of course, the most important Confucian virtues.

59. Therefore, as McNeill (1982, pp. 22–23) has keenly observed, although the elites of traditional states recognized the political need for wealth, they had “a general distrust of and disdain for merchants and men of the marketplace. . . . Accordingly, trade and market-regulated behavior though present from very early times, remained marginal and subordinate in civilized societies before A.D. 1000. . . . Large-scale changes in human conduct, when they occurred, were more likely to be in response to commands coming from some social superior than to any change in supply and demand, buying and selling.”

Theoretically, these three impediments could be overcome if economic actors turned *functionally multifarious*, that is, became active and powerful in political, military, and ideological spheres. The three impediments made this very difficult to achieve in traditional societies, but it was somehow realized in Europe through a series of more or less related developments leading to the formation of a competitive multistate system,⁶⁰ the emergence of chartered towns and independent or semi-independent cities,⁶¹ the Reformation and Renaissance, the genesis of philosophies and new religions that legitimized or even promoted individualism and privately oriented instrumental rationalism.

The multistate system, together with the power of the Catholic Church, not only engendered a weak state tradition; it also precipitated incessant warfare, which in turn fostered publicly oriented instrumental rationalism, cumulative development (in technological development, in the capacity of natural resource extraction, in productivity, in organizational capacity, and more), and the rise of the state power from the Middle Age weak state tradition (chapter 1). The rise of chartered towns and independent or semi-independent commercial cities against the background of a weak state encouraged economic competition and allowed city dwellers, *burgesses*, to govern and militarily defend their own cities. Economic competition also encouraged privately oriented instrumental rationalism and cumulative development in society, while the existence of independent or semi-independent towns and cities endowed economic actors with significant political clout and military means. That ensured a strong bourgeoisie in the emerging nation-states. This is why modernity has two mutually constitutive legs—the rise of nation-states and emergence of industrial capitalism. These were the products of competing political and economic actors, who at the same time also had much interest in cooperation.

The Reformation cracked the Catholic ecumene, leaving the Catholic Church weakened and Protestantism divided and allowing the European states increasing dominance over religious affairs in their own domains.⁶² Together with the Renaissance, the Reformation added momentum to the surge of rational thinking in Europe. Theoretical-formal rationality, which itself was deeply embedded in the Greco-Christian tradition, revived.

The revival of theoretical-formal rationality was important for two reasons. First, it allowed bourgeois intellectuals in the freer environment of the cities to develop theories justifying profit-making motives as positive values, such

60. Mann (1986, chaps. 12–14).

61. Bartlett (1993, chap. 7); Blockmans (1997); Dobb (1946); Mielants (2007); Tilly (1992); Tilly and Blockmans (1994); Weber (1981).

62. Under the control of the states, religion increasingly served the interests of rulers rather than the papacy or the leaders of Protestantism. It even became a state-building device. But its impact on the lives of ordinary Europeans showed little sign of diminution until the nineteenth century (Delumeau 1977; Gorski 2000, 2003; Kamen 1997; McLeod 2000).

as liberalism or individualism, natural law, Protestant ethics, or the idea of the “invisible hand.”⁶³ Gradually, instrumental business activity came no longer to be despised as selfish; it had turned into a positive value, the moral equal of any value-based activity. Increasingly, self-centered actions of individuals in the market were seen as a supreme moral force leading to freedom and to prosperity. The whole process, here referred as *the valuation of privately oriented instrumental rationalism* (see chapter 1) provided the ideological, political, and military foundations for industrial capitalism, and constituted the very essence of modernity. As the valuation intensified, capitalism became increasingly inevitable. Second, the advent of theoretical-formal rationalism together with instrumental rationalism stimulated the progress of the sciences. Although the early phase of scientific development had no immediate impact on technological inventions, it nurtured a rational way of thinking and provided elements of knowledge that were essential to technological invention. As science progressed and commercially motivated inventions proliferated, the relationship between the sciences and technologies also grew closer.⁶⁴

All these developments, from the perpetuation of a multistate system to the emergence of independent and semi-independent cities, the collapse of the Catholic ecumene, and the valuation of privately oriented instrumental rationality, were most crucial to the rise of industrial capitalism because these are factors of a *higher order*. Without them, the economic, demographic, and technological mechanisms that the California School scholars stress are simply irrelevant. But although these higher-order conditions were absolutely necessary for the rise of industrial capitalism they were not sufficient, because the Industrial Revolution was not going to occur under these conditions alone. Now, some of the arguments made by the California School scholars start to make sense. Fortuitously, many of the technologies crucial for capitalist development had already come from China, India, and the Islamic world.⁶⁵ The existence of overseas colonies, to which excess population might migrate and from which resources could be extracted, and the location of coal deposits, could also be important for the rise of industrial capitalism, once these “factors of a higher order” were in place in England and the West.⁶⁶ Finally, if there had been no major technological

63. Less systematic bourgeois ideologies had been bubbling in Europe ever since the Reformation and Renaissance. Tawney (1998) offers a classic account of how the conflicts and compromises between urban-centered Calvinist theology and the bourgeoisie facilitated the emergence of an individualistic spirit in the sixteenth century and the later triumph of laissez-faire philosophies. Gillespie (2008) analyses how the humanist notion of individualism emerged as a new form of Christianity in the fourteenth century and how the tension it created expedited the coming of the Reformation and modern science.

64. After the eighteenth century, inventions came to rely more on advances in science. These advances and the diffusion of the sciences equipped inventors with new ways of thinking and new experimental techniques that were crucial to their inventions (Cardwell 1972; Mokyr 1990, pp. 167–70; Musson 1972).

65. Abu-Lughod (1989); Hobson (2004); Huff (1993); Landes (1998); McNeill (1982).

66. Frank (1998); Goody (1996); Pomeranz (2000).

breakthrough, the diminishing returns of traditional technologies could aggravate England and Europe's problem of population explosion, leading to wars, epidemics, and historical reversals.⁶⁷ Newtonian physics and the invention of the steam engine were indeed crucial to the Industrial Revolution.⁶⁸ But all of these constituents of the Industrial Revolution—technological development in the early modern West, and economic and demographic conditions in England and the West—notably requisite as they were, were ancillary to the European historical dynamism in which Europe's never-institutionalized elite competition had played a decisive role.

Industrial Capitalism: An Impossibility in Traditional China

The economic, demographic, and technological factors that the California School scholars consider crucial to "the great divergence" were unquestionably instrumental in the rise of England and the West, but also unquestionably had little to do with China. On examining China's technological development carefully, a very different pattern becomes apparent.⁶⁹ China's technological development was facilitated by at least two clusters of rather different conditions from those that fostered European technological development.⁷⁰ Many of China's dynasties were long-lasting, and its overall historical continuity was indubitably greater than Europe. The strong imperial government of China also frequently initiated large-scale projects. These were all conducive to innovation and knowledge accumulation.⁷¹ Moreover, most pre-nineteenth century inventions were of empirical type (Francis Bacon's phrase), meaning that they could have been made at any time in history.⁷² The Chinese mentality, pragmatic and eclectic, was very conducive to these kinds of invention. Other conditions, however, had prevented the highly developed Chinese technologies from culminating in a European-style "breakthrough." The Chinese aptitude for holistic

67. On the other hand, once the genie of humans' instrumental desire has escaped from the control of tradition and received glorification it is hard to push it back again. It would not take very long for this kind of society to recover and develop again after a disaster. Technological breakthrough would occur again; it was just a matter of time. Industrial capitalism is, in this sense, an *inevitable accident*.

68. Goldstone (2000).

69. China had by far the strongest fleet in the world in the fifteenth century, but it never occurred to the Chinese to use it for overseas expansion (Deng 1997; Levathes 1994). Until the eighteenth century, China was still a major economic center in the world. According to Frank (1998), before 1820, half the silver produced in the world ended up in China. China made no effort, though, to use its advantages for overseas expansion. Qing China did pursue aggressive policies in Inner Asia, in what was part of the millennia-long China-nomads confrontation (chapter 11), but these policies and the resulting aggression differed qualitatively from modern Western colonialism.

70. See Bodde (1991); Lloyd (1996); Nakayama and Sivin (1973); and Needham (1969) for discussions of the Chinese tradition in sciences and technologies.

71. The imperial state constructed long-distance canals and irrigation networks, palaces, and gigantic ocean-going ships. It also published and widely distributed agricultural handbooks to disseminate and standardize agricultural technologies. The state also conducted geographic surveys and supported astronomical researches for multiple purposes. These and other state activities were instrumental to China's technological development (Deng 1993; Maddison 1998, chap. 1; Needham 1969).

72. Mokyr (1990, p. 167).

and historical thinking slowed the development of theoretical-formal rationalism and modern empiricism,⁷³ whereas in Europe, crucial technological development after the seventeenth century relied more and more on scientific knowledge and the scientific way of thinking.⁷⁴ Most importantly, in late imperial China, no matter whether the inventors were gentry or hands-on artisans,⁷⁵ the nature of the Confucian-Legalist state determined that neither inventions nor scientific discoveries would yield wealth, prestige, or authority.⁷⁶ Therefore, though China had retained its technological supremacy during most of the second millennium, the consensus is that China's technological advance slowed greatly after the Song dynasty.⁷⁷

In analyzing the rise of the West, I have focused on two historical processes that were entwined and crucial to Europe's breakthrough to industrial capitalism—the collapse of the Catholic ecumene and the expansion of bourgeoisie power. Now, I shall focus on unorthodox Neo-Confucian intellectual movements and on the power of the Chinese merchant community during the late Ming and the Qing dynasties, for two reasons: (1) to show why late Ming unorthodox intellectual Confucianism did not fracture the Neo-Confucian ecumene as the Reformation had fractured the Catholic ecumene and (2) to show why the market economy of late imperial China could not endow China's bourgeoisie with sufficient political, military, and ideological strength to undercut the Confucian-Legalist political framework.

The following narrative omits several historical phenomena of late imperial China, such as Zheng He's seven voyages in the beginning of the fifteenth century, the influx of American silver into China, and the brief existence of a multistate system following the Manchu conquest. Yet, some scholars have used these historical phenomena to construct counterfactuals in order to demonstrate that China had had ample opportunities to develop differently, or that it might even have been able to break through to industrial capitalism if these historical phenomena had evolved differently. But Zheng He's voyages were a government project. Although historians are still debating the precise reasons for the voyages,

73. In my understanding, modern science relies on controlled experiments. It requires the ability to postulate deductively the relationships between two variables in an isolated (controlled) situation, without considering other factors. This "biased" way of thinking, crucial for us to determine law-like regularities, comes hard to people accustomed to seeing their world in a holistic or mutually related manner. See chapter 6 for more on the nature of ancient China rationalism, which in many ways shaped the later Chinese mentality and the nature of the Chinese sciences.

74. Developments in steam engine technologies, for example, were from the very beginning informed by scientific advances (Mokyr 1990, pp. 84–92).

75. Elman (2005) correctly points out that many Chinese inventors and scientists were Confucian scholars.

76. Shen Kuo never thought of himself as a scientist. Most of his prestige and authority, and the preponderance of his knowledge, derived from his versatile experiences as a government official and successful diplomat. His most famous book, *Dream Pool Essays* (*Mengxi bitan*), contains much scientific writing, but he wrote it only after he was out of political favor and living in retirement. See Sivin (1982) for a discussion of the mentality and achievements of Shen Kuo and the nature of Chinese sciences.

77. Elman (2005); Goldstone (2008); Landes (1998); Mokyr (1990).

the consensus is that they were not undertaken for conquest or trade. Zheng He's fleet, almost a hundred times the size of Columbus's fleet, was financially unsustainable.⁷⁸ Moreover, it is impossible to see how Zheng's voyages could have led to the weakening of the Neo-Confucian ecumene and the emergence of a strong and functionally manifold bourgeoisie. The influx of American silver in China did change China's economic structure in the coastal regions, and it changed China's monetary and tax systems.⁷⁹ It arguably even contributed to the fall of the Ming dynasty when it ceased (along with silver from Japan) to enter China in large quantities in the early part of the seventeenth century.⁸⁰ But the inflow (or lack thereof) of American silver neither undermined the Neo-Confucian ecumene in any fundamental manner nor elevated the status of Chinese merchants under the Confucian-Legalist state. Finally, some scholars wonder whether China's development might have looked somewhat like Europe's if a multistate system had been sustained after the Manchu conquest. To this question this author's reply is also no. Briefly put, the multistate system had existed in China in the Age of Disunion and again during the Tang-Song transition, and both times, the many competing states had gradually converged into the Confucian-Legalist state political framework. This seventeenth-century outcome was unlikely to be different. Moreover, the multistate system was only one of the five higher-order historical processes that I have identified as crucial to the rise of industrial capitalism. Alone it would have been inconsequential.

A Failed "Chinese Reformation"

During the late Ming and the Ming-Qing transition, there emerged waves of unorthodox Neo-Confucian thinking, analogous to Lutheranism and Calvinism in Europe. Had they taken hold, they would have undermined the Neo-Confucian ecumene in the way that Protestantism fractured the Catholic ecumene. But these unorthodox schools of Neo-Confucianism did not destabilize the Neo-Confucian ecumene to any long-term, consequential extent. The inconsequential outcome of this surge of unorthodox Neo-Confucian thinking deserves to be told in particular because it reveals the resilience of the Confucian-Legalist political system and the impossibility of an indigenous rise of industrial capitalism in China before the arrival of the West.

Unorthodox Confucianism emerged during the late Ming dynasty, was facilitated by scholar-gentry discontent with rigid Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and the increasingly competitive civil-service examinations, and happened in the context of the growing importance of the market economy in southern China. It gained momentum under the influence of Wang Yangming (1472–1529), a Neo-Confucian

78. See Dreyer (2007); Levathes (1994); Quan (1987, pp. 3–5) for the nature of Zheng He's naval expedition and why it had no sequel.

79. Atwell (2008); Quan (1987).

80. Atwell (1997); Wakeman (1985).

scholar, high official, and successful civilian military commander.⁸¹ One of the basic premises of Zhu Xi's *lixue* was that principle (*li*) is real, and therefore can be objectively understood by the "observation and investigation of things." Wang's starting point, however, was that "in the mind lies the principle," i.e., that principle, which is the ability to discriminate between good and evil, is innate in everyone (*xin ji li*),⁸² and that perfect virtue is achieved less through study and self-cultivation, as Zhu Xi had advocated, than through "realizing"—that is, identifying and acting upon one's own innate goodness" (*zhi liangzhi*).⁸³ Only from that point could one "unite knowing and action" (*zhi xing heyi*).⁸⁴ Wang's idealistic theory, however, bore consequences that he had not intended. That is, his dictum, "mind is the principle," opened doors to interpretations ranging from conservative understandings that did not differ much from Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism to individualistic interpretation stressing that the essence of self-cultivation was to achieve one's true self.⁸⁵ Spurred by the highly commercialized southern China environment and the depressing politics of the late Ming dynasty, Wang's theory facilitated the emergence of unorthodox Confucian writings, represented by two major clusters.

Li Zhi (1527–1602), arguably the most radical thinker of the earlier cluster, vehemently attacked the ritualism of mainstream Neo-Confucianism and promoted Buddhism. He praised the directness of children, argued that childlike innocence should be the goal of human cultivation,⁸⁶ justified human wants and profit-making activities as natural, and even praised rebel heroes and advocated a more equal treatment of women. Li also lived very unconventionally in later life. At the age of fifty-four, he resigned from his official position, left his family, shaved his head, and commingled the life of a Buddhist monk and that of a Confucian scholar.⁸⁷ His critics accused him of consorting with prostitutes; frequenting wine shops; and having intimate relationships with Buddhist nuns, widows, and other women. Strikingly, he did not even bother to deny most of the charges.⁸⁸

81. Wang successfully commanded several campaigns against rebels in southern China and was indispensable in suppressing a revolt led by Prince Ning in 1519. See Ching (1976); Ivanhoe (1993, chap. 5); Tang (1970); and Tu (1976) on the life and philosophy of Wang Yangming.

82. Wang's theory that everyone can come to know the good was obviously influenced by the Chan Buddhist doctrine "My heart is Buddha's heart."

83. The concept *liangzhi* (or innate goodness) has also been translated as innate consciousness, innate knowing, or innate awareness. "Realizing" one's own innate goodness might well be paraphrased as "making real"—that is, "bringing to fruition" one's own goodness.

84. Wang's departure from Zhu Xi's orthodoxy can be regarded as a continuation of the famous Goose Lake debate between Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan. Only this time, it was Wang's teaching, a new version of Lu's "School of the Mind," which partly incorporated Zhu Xi's philosophy, that was on the offensive.

85. Not only had Wang's philosophy incorporated elements of Chan Buddhism, it also at the same time raised Chan Buddhism's popularity (Ge 2001, pp. 311–12).

86. In the orthodox Confucian tradition, the mentality and behavior of children, rather than offering a model to emulate, needs to be molded by education.

87. Jiang (2001) provides an informative account of Li Zhi's thought and life after he left his family. See also Chan (1980) for some of Li Zhi's works in English.

88. Huang (1981, p. 205); Xu (2005, p. 215).

Whereas the radical scholars of the first cluster pushed the individualistic tendency in Wang Yangming's philosophy to its limits, scholars of the second cluster were traditionalists in morals but reformers in politics.⁸⁹ Represented by such figures as Huang Zongxi (1610–1695), Fang Yizhi (1611–1671), Gu Yanwu (1613–1682), Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), and Tang Zhen (1631–1704), scholars of this cluster had all lived through the wars and chaos of the Ming-Qing transition. The Manchu conquest of the Ming pained them greatly, but they blamed despotic Ming politics for the calamity. They also criticized Li Zhi's unconventional thinking and behavior, and even the entire Taizhou school with which Li was associated, and they blamed this radical wing of the Wang Yangming tradition for the moral anarchy that they held responsible for the Ming dynasty's collapse.⁹⁰ At the same time, they were all strongly influenced by Wang Yangming, and their thinking resembled that of the first cluster of unorthodox Ming Neo-Confucians. Scholars of this cluster developed a political theory whose key points can mostly be seen as reactions to Ming despotism.⁹¹ (1) The state is a public entity. It does not belong to the emperor, who is only the guest of the state. (2) The emperor and officials should relate as colleagues or friends, not as master and servants. (3) The emperor's power should be constrained by reinstating the position of prime minister and giving it substantial power and by expanding the autonomy of local governments.⁹² It should also be held in check by the opinions of the Confucian scholars. The eunuchs and imperial consorts' families should be strictly prevented from amassing power.⁹³ (4) Profit-making commercial activities are legitimate,⁹⁴ and merchants should not be regarded as occupying the lowest social status, below the gentry, peasants, and artisans.⁹⁵

Immediately noticeable from the foregoing very brief summary are the striking differences between Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism and the two clusters of late Ming unorthodox Neo-Confucianism. These unorthodox ideas certainly appeared no less radical to the orthodox Neo-Confucians than Luther's Wittenberg postings to orthodox Catholics. If these ideas had taken hold, they could very well

89. Many people of this group were either spiritual heirs to or had links with the Donglin movement initiated in 1604. They created an influential reform-oriented "public opinion" by their teachings at the Donglin Academy in Wuxi. The movement was suppressed in 1622 after it opposed the eunuch Wei Zongxian, leading to the torture and execution of its members (Brokaw 1991, pp. 21–25, 138–56).

90. McMorran (1973).

91. This summary is based on the following sources: de Bary (1983, chap. 4); Feng and Xie (2003); Gong (2005b); Wei (2003, pp. 876–986).

92. Zhu Yuanzhang, the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, abolished the position of prime minister in order to strengthen the emperor's personal power.

93. The power of the court eunuchs during the Eastern Han period was equaled only by that of the court eunuchs during the Ming dynasty (Tsai 1996).

94. This reflected the reality that by the late Ming dynasty a *jinshi* degree, and therefore an official position, became increasingly difficult to obtain, and business in China's wealthier regions became very profitable, turning many of the gentry families to business activities (Brook 1993).

95. He Xinyin (1517–1579), for example, changed the traditional ranking of occupations, placing merchants above peasants and craftsmen but below scholars on the social scale. Huang Zongxi also famously argued that those who produced and those who traded were all fundamental to society (Feng and Xie 2003, pp. 237–39).

have led to a Chinese “Reformation,” undermining the ideological bases of the Confucian-Legalist state and paving the way for new possibilities. Yet, although the new unorthodoxy achieved a degree of influence among some scholars, it did not, for two related reasons, have any real impact, unlike the Reformation in Europe. First, the premodern Catholic Church not only insisted that the Bible represented truth but also that its interpretation of the Bible was the sole truth, the sole path of righteousness, and the sole way to its concept of Heaven. Luther, Calvin, and their followers being no less absolute, the ensuing controversy led to the destruction of the Catholic ecumene. Confucianism, even Neo-Confucianism, was seen by most gentry scholars more as a system of ethics than as a transcendental truth. Therefore the debates over Li Zhi’s unorthodox views were private in nature—for example, between Li and Geng Dingxiang, the brother of Li’s lifelong friend.⁹⁶ The Ming government never took sides in the debates, much less persecuted an opposing side, and the mainstream Confucian scholars were more interested in passing the civil-service examinations, for which mastering Zhu Xi’s version of Neo-Confucianism was essential. Unorthodox Confucianism, therefore, never caused any consequential schism in the Confucian ecumene.

Second, and more important, China was not a congeries of European-style multistates. After Luther posed his theses on the church door in Wittenberg, he was “protected” by Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, from possible persecution by the Roman Curia. This, as Mann has pointed out, “immediately prevented a purely religious compromise,” and split Europe ideologically as well as politically.⁹⁷ In China, however, though the state was arguably more tolerant of various persuasions, if the single state decided to repress, its repression was highly effective. Wang Yangming’s teaching could not be disseminated during the reign of Jiajing (1521–1567) because the emperor decided to ban it,⁹⁸ and the radical wing of the Wang Yangming school, represented by Li Zhi, pretty much ended with Li’s suicide in 1602 under the joint assault of scholarly criticism and repression by the local officials.⁹⁹ As for the second cluster of Neo-Confucian philosophers active during the Ming-Qing transition, the influence of their reformist ideals

96. But when Geng was the minister of revenue, Li Zhi published his letters and essays in a book entitled *A Book to Burn*, mercilessly attacking Geng’s understanding of Confucianism. The book earned Li Zhi national celebrity, but his writings and, more importantly, his unconventional way of life also provoked attacks by local gentry mobs. Li Zhi was physically assaulted and part of the temple where he resided was burned. There is no sign, however, that Geng or any other senior officials were behind these assaults. In fact, Li Zhi was always protected by some gentry-officials, and after Li Zhi had made some conciliatory gestures Geng also forgave and thereafter protected Li Zhi (Huang 1981; Jiang 2001; Xu 2005).

97. Mann (1986, p. 467).

98. Ge (2001, pp. 299–330).

99. Li Zhi was jailed while living close to Beijing. Apparently it was Li Zhi’s unconventional lifestyle rather than his views that provoked this imprisonment (Jiang 2001). Li ended his life by cutting his throat with a razor blade in prison, though it was later known that the officials in charge of Li Zhi’s case had recommended only that the accused to be escorted back to his hometown. The radical wing of the Wang Yangming school declined after Li’s death (Ge 2001, p. 319), and Li Zhi’s works were frequently banned during the Qing dynasty.

also waned as the leading figures died out, the Manchus adopted the model of Confucian-Legalist state (albeit with many nomadic features),¹⁰⁰ and new generation of scholars passed the civil-service examinations and became Qing officials.¹⁰¹

Moreover, although the politically reformist spirit of the Ming-Qing transition generation was gone, their moral conservatism was endorsed by the Manchu rulers. The writings and activities of the early Qing scholars created a turn to conservatism with multiple social-cultural consequences: The lineage institutions and Neo-Confucian ritualism were much strengthened in the villages. The subjugation of women intensified as the chastity cult took deeper root. Popular literary forms and urban entertainment businesses withered as the state tightened its control over the contents.¹⁰²

The Qing state, during a very large part of its history, was also more repressive to thought than the mid- to late Ming state. Many books written by scholars in the late Ming dynasty and during the Ming-Qing transition were banned, and the Qing state's literary inquisitions (*wenzi yu*) and severe punishment of unorthodox writings greatly intimidated the scholars.¹⁰³ Between the intellectual interests inherited from the Ming-Qing transition and the caution generated by the Qing strictures, Qing scholars of the eighteenth century, motivated by caution, shifted their study to historical materials, which triggered the emergence of a kind of meticulous and apolitical scholarship known as evidential research (*kaozheng xue*).¹⁰⁴ These scholars "stressed exacting research, rigorous analysis, and the collection of impartial evidence drawn from ancient artifacts and historical documents and texts,"¹⁰⁵ and their scholarship created a few sparks worthy of praise.¹⁰⁶ But the scholars in this intellectual movement were mostly cultural conservatives.¹⁰⁷ Their attitude toward Western science and technology was chauvinistic,¹⁰⁸

100. Naquin and Rawski (1987, chap. 1).

101. The new generation of scholars accepted Manchu rule, many of them being children or students of the famous scholars during the Ming-Qing transition. But their attitudes toward the Manchu rulers were ambivalent (Struve 1979). This ambivalence in many ways shaped their scholarship and social practices, as I will briefly discuss.

102. See Chow (1994) for the turn to conservatism during the early and mid-Qing dynasty.

103. Literary inquisition, that is, state persecution of scholars for their writings, flourished during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Qing rulers, who were very sensitive to anti-Manchu expression, executed many scholars and their families as well for what the scholars had written, or sometimes just because the accused had inadvertently used a taboo word in a text.

104. It should be noted that the evidential research (also called empirical research) was not entirely a response to Qing despotism and censorship. Other social forces were also behind the rise of this category of scholarship (Guy 1987, chap. 3).

105. Elman (1984, p. 6). I agree with Elman that evidential research represented a significant shift in imperial China's intellectual history, and that some of the thinking of these scholars, as well as of their predecessors during the Ming-Qing transition, resembled the thinking of certain Renaissance European thinkers. On the other hand, the unorthodox late Ming and mid-Qing intellectual developments left almost no deep impressions on Qing politics, culture, and society comparable to the impact of Renaissance intellectual development on European politics, culture, and society.

106. These scholars criticized Zhu Xi and Song Neo-Confucianism and tried to revive the Han dynasty interpretation of Confucianism (known as "Han learning").

107. Chow (1994).

108. These scholars generally clung to the notion that Westerners were only good at devising intricate machinery and that even those machine-making skills originated in China (Zhang 1998, pp. 206–12).

and their primary research interests and methodologies differed greatly from early modern European sciences.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism remained the orthodoxy, and scholars still passed the examinations only by mastering Zhu Xi's curriculum. When European imperialism arrived in China in the nineteenth century, while the Qing empire was already facing multiple challenges and in decline, the Confucian-Legalist political model was still rock-solid. Only after repeated military setbacks and humiliations did this political model start to crack and China to falter into a coerced modernization. And only about the turn of the twentieth century were the late Ming and Qing unorthodox writings hailed as the "Chinese Reformation" or "Enlightenment" by reformers who were searching for reform ideologies in homegrown traditions.¹¹⁰

Weaknesses of the Chinese Economic Actors

As noted earlier, the rise in the power of the bourgeoisie was one of the key conditions for the rise of industrial capitalism. In premodern Europe successful artisans or heads of trading companies controlled the city-states and had a considerable say in the governance of the larger states; large overseas trading companies controlled semiprivate or private armies of significant strength; scholars of urban background wrote treatises defending moneymaking as a virtue. Money makers thus wielded a political, military, and ideological strength hitherto unparalleled in Eurasian history. Against this background, let us now evaluate the position of Chinese merchants before the arrival of the West.

In his study of Chinese cities, Skinner's hexagon model is paradigmatic, because it convincingly illustrates the economic functions of China's market towns.¹¹¹ Skinner's model applies best to local townships and only to a lesser extent to county seats, because political considerations acquired increasing weight in determining the locations, functions, and fortunes of a city at or above the county level.¹¹² Overall, Chinese cities obtained significant economic functions beginning with the Song dynasty's "urban revolution,"¹¹³ and the cities of late imperial China shared many similarities with European cities.¹¹⁴ These similarities apart, the urban Chinese merchant class notably never for a moment enjoyed autonomous political and legal status, let alone their own military of any significant

109. Guy (1987, p. 46).

110. de Bary (1983, p. 101).

111. Skinner (1964/5).

112. For example, Jiaying prefecture had only three counties at the beginning of the Ming dynasty but seven by 1429. During the Ming dynasty Songjiang prefecture had only three counties, but by the Qing, nine. These increases were political—that is, the result of state initiatives (Feng 2002, chap. 2).

113. Elvin (1978, p. 85); Skinner (1977, pp. 3–31); Twitchett (1968).

114. According to Rowe (1989), however, one major difference was apparent between nineteenth century European and Chinese cities. Growing cities in industrializing Western Europe were experiencing large-scale urban unrest, class conflict, and anomie, brought on by the Industrial Revolution. Contemporaneous Chinese cities were very well administered thanks to the coordinated efforts of the local officials and the social elite. Contributing to the absence of anomie were also the Confucianism-centered cultural consensus in Chinese cities and the unshaken dominance of the Confucian-Legalist political system until the assault of Western imperialism.

type.¹¹⁵ Scholars of Chinese urban life all acknowledge the decisive impact that dynastic changes and political and administrative decisions had on the fortunes of Chinese cities.¹¹⁶

Chinese merchants' lack of autonomy does not mean that they were powerless and that the state had total reign over businesses or that the state actually wished to eradicate profit-making activities. Except for the antibusiness inclination of the early Ming emperors, the position of the late imperial Chinese state toward business was mostly practical (as it was toward most societal matters).¹¹⁷ Most of the time the late imperial Chinese state protected, supported, and participated in/or monopolized various commercial activities,¹¹⁸ and it maintained different levels of "property rights" according to the nature of the property or products.¹¹⁹

Their lack of autonomy does mean, however, that Chinese merchants did not have any political and military means, nor any ideological weapons, to defend their interests as their European counterparts had, and that their "property rights" existed ultimately at the state's discretion. This had a huge impact on the behavior of Chinese merchants. For instance, facing the political dominion of the state and the ideological dominion of Neo-Confucianism, merchants of the Ming and Qing dynasties were pressingly eager for their children to receive Confucian educations and become gentry-officials.¹²⁰ They cultivated close relations with local officials and marriage alliances with gentry's families. They acted as local tax collectors for the government and took part in the governing of late imperial China's market towns.¹²¹ Participating in local charities and religious festivals and emulating the lifestyle of the Confucian gentry made them "honorable merchants."¹²² Their behavior earned them respect and trust and benefited their businesses.¹²³ Yet their collective inability to conjure up and to establish as positive values such nontraditionalist ideas as liberalism or "the invisible hand" to justify their money-making, and their subordination to the state and officialdom, highlights their weakness as a class, and the impossibility of an indigenous creation of industrial capitalism in China before the arrival of the West.¹²⁴

115. Bartlett (1993, chap. 7); Mott (1999, p. 761).

116. Feng (2002); Finnane (1993); Johnson (1993); Marmé (1993); Shiba (1970); Xu and Wu (2000).

117. Market relations flourished during the late Ming dynasty as the state's draconian policy waned. The Manchus' attitude toward money making was realistic (Rowe 2009, p. 132), which brought a quick economic recovery after the devastating Ming-Qing transition.

118. Wong (1999, pp. 222–26).

119. See also Feng (2002) and Xu and Wu (2003, pp. 710–26) for more recent discussions of the state's and local elites' control of the economy during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

120. Gentry-official was still the most prestigious career during the Qing dynasty even when the market economy flourished (Naquin and Rawski 1987, p. 123).

121. Mann (1987).

122. Lufrano (1997).

123. Brook (1998, pp. 215–16); Lufrano (1997).

124. Li Zhi's (1990, p. 48) following sympathetic lines vividly underscore Chinese merchants' absolute subordination to the political authorities during late Ming: "Why should merchants be regarded as lowly? They transport

SUMMARY

During the Song dynasty, large metropolitan centers appeared and market relations greatly expanded. By the time of the Ming and Qing dynasties business activities even attracted some Confucian gentry.¹²⁵ But although Ming-Qing commerce was able to generate strong and diverse economic dynamism,¹²⁶ the Neo-Confucian ecumene was not undermined and the Chinese merchants riding the waves of commerce wielded no centralized, coercive political or military powers and had no ideologies that might justify money making and convert their despised activities into positive values.¹²⁷ China's economic actors were simply too weak and decentralized to be able to undermine the dominance of the Confucian-Legalist state. In the end, notwithstanding similarities with Western Europe, China had no way to break with the Confucian-Legalist patterns of the Chinese past and embark on industrial capitalism before being compelled by Western imperialism.¹²⁸

great quantities of goods, bear all kinds of risks along the way, suffer humiliation at the hands of border officials, put up with verbal abuse during marketplace transactions, and endure myriad forms of hardship. Their burdens are enormous, their profits small. This being so, however, they must strive to ensure their profits and steer clear of misuse by befriendng and bribing the officials and notables. How could the merchants possibly sit proudly above the officials and notables?"

125. Brook (1993, 1998).

126. Brook (2005, p. 8). Brook (1993, p. 20) has asserted that "the history of the late Ming was in part the history of economic power asserting itself against political power, it was also the history of the locality asserting itself against the state." I agree with the assertion but would add a small qualification: although decentralized economic activity and local political forces at the time did generate unmistakable local economic and cultural vitality (often at odds with Neo-Confucian orthodoxy), they did not in any far-reaching way undermine the overwhelming political-ideological dominance of the Confucian-Legalist state, which was still intact in the mid-nineteenth century.

127. Mielants (2007, chaps. 2–4) has presented an updated discussion of the merchants' political weakness in non-European civilizations (including China), and the negative impact of such weakness on the rise of industrial capitalism in those civilizations.

128. As Brook (1998, p. 201) has aptly put it apropos of the late Ming: "China was not generating capitalism in the late Ming. Rather, it created something else: an extensive market economy that used state communication networks to open links to local economies, organized rural and urban labor into consecutive production processes in certain regions without disrupting the rural household as the basic unit of production, reorganized patterns of consumption without entirely severing consumption from production, and knit itself slowly but surely to gentry society in ways that would erode the Confucian disdain for commerce and result in a powerful condominium of elite interests in the Qing. But this was not capitalism in the European sense." Brook's comments on the characteristics of the late Ming market economy are also to a large extent applicable to the Qing economy.

Concluding Remarks

This concluding chapter examines two issues: the impact of the past on China today, and the methodological and theoretical stances that I adopted in my research and in the writing of this book.

FROM PAST TO PRESENT

The single biggest rupture between imperial and modern China is the virtually irreversible decline of Confucianism, galvanized by Western and Japanese imperialism. The Republican Revolution of 1911 put an end to the millennia-old Confucian-Legalist political system. About the time of the May 4th Movement in 1919, Chinese started to identify Confucianism and Confucian culture as the source of China's weakness. Ever since, the Chinese state and the majority of intellectuals have made great efforts to destroy traditional Chinese culture and tear down the institutions that supported it. The Communist Revolution of 1949 and the radicalism that was rampant during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) only brought that radical trend to its extreme.

In China today, the Confucian moral and political order is again being promoted by a few intellectuals and even partly endorsed by the state.¹ But these attempts to restore it as China's dominant value system have been futile. The obstacles are not merely the result of China's century-long radical modernization drive. If modernization were the only factor behind the collapse of Confucianism, other world religions, such as Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism, would face the same fate. But each of these religions has survived the onslaught of modernization and remained a powerful social force.² The singular collapse of Confucianism had much to do with the nature of Confucianism itself. Although Confucianism is regarded as a religion by many scholars, we should keep in mind that this "religion" speaks more to the moral order of this world than to a transcendental divine order. Confucianism was dominant in imperial China not only because it provided a legitimate basis for state power and a moral

1. See Bell (2008) for the development of New-Confucianism in post-Mao China.

2. Berger (1999); Casanova (1994).

order for society, but also because Neo-Confucian institutions (particularly the civil-service examination and lineage communities) reinforced it. Once these functions and institutions vanished, Confucianism became rootless and its influence shrank—from being an almighty organizing force of state and society to merely a decentralized and noncoercive ideology/philosophy. This is the central problem faced by those who endeavor to restore Confucianism to a measure of its traditional status.³

Many characteristics of modern China and its near future are related to the collapse of Confucianism. First, Chinese are proud of the fact that China is a major world civilization, but this pride is also a burden. Now that the Chinese are getting rich, some Chinese intellectuals wish urgently to construct a Chinese model in the modern world—a moral, political, and international order that incorporates various Western elements while placing Confucianism at the center.⁴ Hindering the effort is the incongruity between the increasingly prevailing Western notion of individualism and the collective orientation of Confucian values. More importantly, as noted earlier, Confucianism has little institutional support in China. It therefore seems unlikely that its recent advocacy by some Chinese intellectuals will be effective, although the tension this has created will have real repercussions in society.

Second, in today's China, only a few intellectuals are actively constructing and promoting moral and political visions centering on Confucianism, even though some of their concerns are more widely shared. Westernization is still what really drives China's current development, by which I mean a widespread desire to get rich, an increasing acceptance of individualistic cultural values, and the prevalence of a progressive vision of history. In other major civilizations, including the modern West, various world religions have survived the onslaught of modernization, acted as brakes on individualism, and balanced the progressive impulses of society. The collapse of Confucianism left China without those brakes. In comparison with other countries, conservative forces are considerably weaker in China. The progressive sense of history is widely shared among government officials, intellectuals, and the general populace. Westernization thus finds its most unreserved expression in today's China.

The collapse of the Confucian-Legalist state and the decline of Confucian culture also have completely altered China's religious ecology.⁵ In imperial China, Confucianism supplied morals to local popular religion. Without Confucianism, popular religion is now promoted by Chinese officials as a source of local festivals,

3. For instance, the erection of a statue of Confucius in front of the History Museum of China in Tiananmen Square in the beginning of 2011 has provoked strong and diverse criticism in China, showing clearly that Confucianism has been reduced to a mere philosophy and that everybody is free to have a negative opinion on it.

4. See Jiang (2003); Kang (2005) and the journal *Yuandao* edited by Chen Ming.

5. Sun (2010).

mostly for the purpose of attracting tourists. Among the populace, its magic has regained predominance. More importantly, the collapse of Confucianism provides room for the growth of other religions, particularly Protestantism. At this point the Protestant population of China is estimated to be between fifty-eight and seventy million people, and the number increases daily.⁶

The collapse of the Confucian-Legalist state and the declining importance of Confucianism, however, do not mean that the past has become irrelevant in today's China. The millennia-long domination of the Confucian-Legalist state has given China a strong state tradition, a huge core territory, a large population with a shared identity, and a pro-education ideal.

China's huge territorial size and large population made it very difficult for foreign powers to dismantle it in the heyday of imperialism. Shared identity made China's nation building an easier task, in comparison with most other developing countries. China's strong state tradition has played a crucial role in its recent economic success (though the same strong state tradition also led China to disaster during the Maoism regime). China's long tradition of the civil-service examination had fostered in China a culture that stressed the importance of achievement through education. A strong state, human capital, and a large population with shared identity are the key conditions enabling China's recent economic success.⁷

Due to the millennia-long existence of the Confucian-Legalist state, by the nineteenth century over 90 percent of China's population experienced a shared Neo-Confucian culture. Beginning in the eighteenth century, with the explosive rise in population, Han Chinese also migrated in large numbers to regions that until then had largely been populated by ethnic minorities. This demographic legacy makes it almost impossible for China's ethnic minorities to achieve independence even if they desire it. In recent decades, nationalistic consciousness has been on the rise among the Tibetans and Uyghurs. I expect similar consciousness to rise among other major ethnic minorities, in part because the Chinese government's policies toward ethnic minorities have been working unintentionally to strengthen ethnic identities.⁸ But although the independence movement of

6. The low fifty-eight-million estimate is from the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life (<http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/ChristianityAppendixC.pdf>). The high seventy-million estimate is from Stark, Johnson, and Mencken (2011).

7. Zhao (1994).

8. China has many policies and practices favoring ethnic minorities that at the same time unintentionally strengthen the identity of ethnic minorities. For instance, the one-child policy in China applies only to the Han Chinese and not to ethnic minorities. Colleges admit the children of ethnic minorities with considerably lower entrance examination scores than their Han counterparts. A Han Chinese is punished more severely than a member of major ethnic minorities in cases of brawls between the two. A huge amount of government funding is channeled each year to regions with large ethnic minority populations, particularly those regions in which ethnic consciousness runs high. Local languages and cultures are strongly promoted in school and society in areas with considerable minority populations.

some ethnic minorities has gained momentum, their chances for independence are very slim due to the overwhelmingly large Han populations.⁹

The Confucian-Legalist state tradition also instills in China a tradition of civilian rule that is quite unusual among the developing countries. Warlordism dominated Chinese politics between the late 1910s and early 1930s. Still, no warlords of this period declared a military government and, moreover, these warlords were all instrumental in the establishment of key civilian institutions in the places they controlled. Once China was reunified, whether under the nationalist or the communist government, the state implemented various divide-and-rule and checks-and-balances mechanisms on the military power with little resistance. In short, unless China runs into another prolonged civil war, its military is unlikely to have a major say in politics. In fact, I venture to argue that, even if China later experiences a regime change, civilian rule will resume very quickly after the initial chaos because of its strong civilian-rule tradition.

The legacies of the Confucian-Legalist state tradition have given China an inward-looking character. China's long history and frequent changes of fortune make Western imperialism less likely to leave a permanent mark on Chinese psychology in the same way as in many other developing nations.¹⁰ China's large territory and population also alleviate the Chinese people's concern about foreign threats and compel the Chinese government to focus on the innumerable domestic problems. Chinese foreign policy has so far been moderate most of the time, instead of hawkish, in part because of the dominance of civilian officials in politics.

In chapter 1, I suggested that state power can be legitimized in three ideal-typical ways: by an ideology that promises a better future, by commonly accepted political procedures (e.g., regular competitive elections), and by the state's satisfactory provision of public goods.¹¹ I also asserted that China has inherited a strong tradition of performance-based legitimacy derived from the concept of the Mandate of Heaven (chapter 2). In today's China, performance-based legitimacy means that the government's right to rule is primarily justified by its economic and moral actions. Performance-based legitimacy has compelled the regime to make greater effort and has thus greatly contributed to post-Mao China's economic success and to a general improvement of Chinese living standards in recent years.¹² But performance-based legitimacy requires ever higher levels of performance. The state in imperial China had no major problem maintaining

9. If the Chinese state breaks down during a regime change, the event will be an opportunity for some of the ethnic minorities to claim independence. Yet, due to the overwhelming Han Chinese population, the independence movement is very likely to induce ethnic violence and even ethnic cleansing staged by militia organized by the ethnic Chinese. This is a highly probable and worrisome prospect.

10. For instance, Chinese intellectuals have never been able to produce a theory like Edward Said's orientalism, even though China was pestered by Western imperialism for over a century.

11. See also Zhao (2001, 2009b).

12. Zhao (1994).

performance legitimacy because it faced only limited demands, and maintaining power was really its primary goal. The present-day Chinese state, however, faces too many demands because it promises to bring a better and happier life to the people. Chinese living standard has greatly improved in recent years, but the Chinese soon began to take their newly acquired affluence for granted and have raised their expectations accordingly.¹³ More importantly, economic development brings with it new problems, such as rising inequality, ethnic conflict, corruption, massive layoffs, and environment degradation. Notwithstanding that the Chinese government is spending more and more money on dealing with these problems, riots, protests, and ethnic violence are frequent in China. At present, the Chinese state faces no major political crisis, largely thanks to the rising economy. When the economy slows significantly, however, another large-scale anti-regime protest, similar to the 1989 Beijing Student Movement, is likely.¹⁴

METHODOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

Many questions, both methodological and philosophical, arose in the course of writing this book. They guided me to propose a general theory of social change and to adopt a narrative style and analytic strategy that would best capture my understanding of social sciences inquiry and the nature of history.

PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES INQUIRY

What do social scientists do? As I see it, we are storytellers, wishing to tell stories that more accurately reflect what happened in the past or is happening now. This is hard to do. Obtaining good data is always a problem. Although new quantitative and qualitative research methods continue to be devised, none of the extant methods fully serves our needs. More importantly, having good data does not

13. Let me just provide one example to illustrate this point. Before 2000, most urban Chinese were living in very congested houses that did not have a private bathroom, but in today's China, owning a three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment is common. Yet, this remarkable improvement in housing does not make those who can afford it happy. I was once told by a Beijing cab driver that if Mao were still alive and were to organize a rebellion, he would immediately join it. After some probing, I learned why the driver was upset: he had just signed a twenty-year mortgage for a three-bedroom, two-bath apartment in a very good part of Beijing. He told me angrily: "Twenty years. Twenty years! My apartment will be taken away by the bank if anything goes wrong on my side in the next twenty years. What kind of system is this?! What kind of government is this?! Rebellion is the only way out in this kind of situation." Similar feelings, which may seem outrageous to Western readers, are commonplace among the Chinese.

14. One could argue that people blame the government in any kind of regime when social problems become serious. But if a regime bases its legitimacy on commonly accepted political procedure, as in a matured multiparty democracy, grievances can be eased by a change of government. The current Chinese state offers no such alternative. Moreover, because of the state's heavy reliance on performance to survive, any challenge to the economic and moral performance of top officials or to specific state policies also directly challenges the regime's legitimacy. This structural constraint offers extremely limited opportunities for the Chinese government to channel social conflict into institutionalized politics. See Zhao (2012) for a more systematic analysis of China's political future based on the theory of state legitimacy.

guarantee an accurate story. Why? Because even a minor historical episode comprises so many events, phenomena, and experiences as to preclude an account that completely recapitulates the episode. Therefore, we have to select from the data and organize our selections into a coherent narrative, but there is no consensus among social scientists on which data to select and how to organize them. At present, three ideal-typical narrative strategies can be discerned in social sciences practice—the structural-based account, the time and event-based account, and the account aiming at discerning the meaning of certain social action—each with its own strengths and weaknesses. For simplicity, let me call the adherents of these three narrative strategies *sociologists*, *historians*, and *anthropologists*.¹⁵ These are simply ideal-typical categories. In practice, each discipline includes numerous and substantial variations in research interests and narrative styles.

Ideal-typical sociologists tell stories by following structural logic. They begin a story by posing one or several historical patterns and explaining how these patterns are shaped or even determined by the social-structural forces they have delineated. By referring only to structural conditions and associated mechanisms, an ideal-type sociologist can produce a highly deterministic narrative that omits the role in history of humans' meaning-seeking, relational, and eventful activities.

Historians follow a different ground rule: the belief that history is shaped by series of events that are not linked to the structural conditions of the society, and that an occurrence can be significant in, or even alter, the trajectory of history (concepts such as junctures, turning points, defining moments, and watersheds have been created to express this point). Ideal-type historians are those who have followed this insight to the extreme. They reject the effects of structural forces, which greatly reduces their interest in the long-term, large-scale history in favor of a focus on short-term, small-scale historical episodes or even on just one aspect of a small episode. They do so convinced that a better-contextualized account can be achieved by more exhaustive research on a small-scale historical episode. This epistemological stance, however, entails two weaknesses. Focusing on a minor historical episode or just one aspect of it can lead to conclusions that convey the complexity and diversity of human experiences but miss the larger picture and the longer connections. Moreover, at least in theory, even a minor historical episode encompasses far too much information for historians to include it all and still construct a meaningful story. In the end, historians must be guided by particular research questions in selecting data; only thus can they construct a story that fits their research agendas. Different research agendas end up with different stories, which are well contextualized in some aspects but miss the mark in others. We have only our subjective interests and judgment by which to judge the quality of their work.

15. I regard ideal-typical economics as a discipline that centers on only a few sociological mechanisms that are positively valued and ideal-typical political science as an applied social science discipline drawing insights from economics, sociology, and philosophy, and, to a much lesser extent, from history and anthropology.

Ideal-typical anthropologists do not believe that social phenomena can be explained or that the dynamics of any historical episode can be objectively presented. They stress that past historical figures and modern social scientists are both meaningful. Historical figures conjured up certain understandings of their worlds and certain justifications for their actions, and their understandings and justifications generated not only the dynamics of history but also the ways that history was recorded and understood. Likewise, social scientists also read historical data, raise research questions, and tell stories in ways that are shaped by the values they uphold and the meanings they consciously or unconsciously attach to the subject under investigation. Instead of striving for causal explanations or objective accounts, ideal-typical anthropologists opt for new interpretations aimed at overturning the conventional wisdom, displacing hitherto routine views, and some do so in the hopes that once their views are widely accepted, it will not only modify our understanding of history but also impact future historical development. On the positive side, anthropologists' deconstructive endeavors have rendered obsolete a large part of social sciences knowledge created less than half a century ago. Moreover, the popularization of the deconstructive mode of reasoning has created epistemological uncertainty in our thinking, constraining social scientists to be more reflective about the limitations of our data, the biases in our conceptualizations and categorizations, and the hidden assumptions in our interpretations, explanations, and theorizations. On the other hand, ideal-typical anthropologists seldom ask themselves why particular ideologies and meaning-guided practices, among a plethora of competing ideologies and practices, achieve dominance in a society. Ironically, the deconstruction-oriented ideal-typical anthropologists are not so good at asking themselves, "why?" Questions such as why a particular version of the story is more accurate or more useful than another, or why people should be persuaded by a certain account among competing accounts are not their concern. The triumph of deconstruction in the social sciences, therefore, has also ushered in bad scholarship, which is hiding behind incomprehensible rhetoric and ponderous "theories."

I hope that the narrative strategy I have adopted in this book will merge the strengths (and obviate the weaknesses) of the three ideal-type disciplines. Ideal-typical historians consider that more context makes for better stories, and ideal-typical anthropologists favor reinterpretations. But both seem indifferent to valid criteria that would distinguish sound context from biased context or viable new interpretations from banal or preposterous ones. This book, therefore, imposes a methodological constraint on the social sciences—a better account must be one that explains more. As history, my book has sought to explain four important historical patterns in China. Why did Eastern Zhou China experience both a drive toward rationalization and a quick cumulative development? Why did this impulse toward rationalization and quick cumulative development culminate in China's unification in 221 BCE as a powerful bureaucratic state?

Why did a highly durable structure, which I label the Confucian-Legalist state, emerge soon after this unification? And why, until the incursion of the West, did the Confucian-Legalist model persist, precluding any possibility of an indigenous growth of industrial capitalism any time before the twentieth century? In addressing these questions I have also posed numerous other research questions of different levels and tried to relate the answers to China's historical patterns. Put differently, instead of trying to explain one or more historical patterns according to several salient structural factors and mechanisms, as most comparative historical sociologists do, I have raised numerous questions and attempted to answer them guided by the same theoretical framework.

My major concern has been to analyze historical patterns rather than to relate China's history. Nevertheless, learning from historians, I have as much as possible adopted a temporal narrative style, which makes for a more coherent contextualization at multiple levels. And at many points I have treated history's complex and uneven temporal patterns as puzzles to be explained, thus further enlarging the number of questions worthy of consideration.

I have relied heavily on macrostructural conditions and social mechanisms in analyzing the patterns of the Chinese past. But I do not rely on a single factor or a fixed set of mechanisms to explain everything. Again, learning from historians, I am keenly aware that social structural forces shape but do not determine history, and that the structural conditions of a society, though sometimes long-lasting, are changed by human activities. I therefore have devoted much attention to the changing nature, relations, and significance of various macrostructural forces, as well as to the changing relationships and importance of various microlevel factors and mechanisms as a result of changes in macrostructural conditions. Rather than providing a structure-based causal analysis, as most sociologists do, I have relied heavily on dialectics. Moreover, inspired by anthropological sensibility, I focus in large part on the roles of ideologies and of humans' meaningful practices in history. Differing from anthropologists, however, I see the creation of ideology as a largely noncoercive, pluralistic endeavor, unless the state or other centralized, coercive and semi-coercive actors are the creators or promoters. Therefore, instead of an account of how a certain discursive process shaped history, my focus is also to show how humans' discursive activities are shaped (but not determined) by variant structural conditions and associated mechanisms, and to explain the ecology of the meaning systems and the reasons why a certain meaning system or ideology became dominant in a certain time and place.

THE NATURE OF HISTORY

The theoretical framework and narrative style of this book were also shaped by my understanding of history. Different research focuses can to a certain degree differently conceive the nature of history. For the purposes of this book, I see

history as ongoing, improvisational music composed of four “main notes,” which is used to analogize the four ideal types of social power—ideological, economic, political, and military—generated by social actors’ competition for dominance. History has patterns because social actors’ improvisations are shaped by the differing intrinsic natures of the four ideal-type power sources discussed in chapter 1, as well as by the different structural conditions and associated dominant social mechanisms generated by different relationship patterns of the four power sources.¹⁶

History unfolds, however, through social actors’ meaning-guided activities. Moreover, the reconfiguration of the four power sources as a result of social actors’ competitive activities potentially yields endless patterns. Social actors’ activities not only produce and reproduce the configuration of the four power sources and the associated structural conditions, but also contribute to their changes. Moreover, the configuration of the four power sources and the associated structural conditions of a society shape but do not determine the exact ways in which social actors will act. No moment in history is wholly predictable—first, because social actors’ improvisational activities sometimes have minimal social impact but at other times create watershed events that alter the natures and configurations of the four power sources in a society. History is also not wholly predictable because the actions of social actors naturally create uncertainties at every step and because social actors are not only seldom able to coordinate their actions but are also unaware of their actual roles in an ongoing historical process.

History, being shaped by competing social actors whose actions are improvisational and uncoordinated, has a heterogeneous and unpredictable temporality. Humans’ competitive activities can generate potentially endless configurations of the four power sources, and the direction history takes at each turning point always arises out of multiple possibilities and uncertainties. This enables contemporary historians to understand historical dynamics as a nonteleological process. Indeed, history has no purpose or predetermined end.

In his recent masterpiece *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*, Sewell wrote regretfully that, although historians like himself “have gleefully cast aside the notion of structural determination, the shape of our own social world has been fundamentally transformed by changes in the structures of world capitalism.”¹⁷ Sewell actually expresses a puzzling disjuncture between modern social conditions and an intellectual world that should supposedly reflect on the modern social conditions. On the one hand, the domination of industrial capitalism and state militarism has produced a cumulative developmental drive so strong as to make the entire twentieth century a teleological

16. For instance, the mechanism of the free-rider problem dominates workplaces under state socialism, a system in which a worker will not be fired for incompetence.

17. Sewell (2005, p. 49).

moment. Liberals are more likely to view this moment positively as progress, but conservatives and leftists stress its negatives, ranging from environmental degradation, population explosion, and resource depletion to rising inequality and global injustice, use of mind-altering drugs and related global crime, and proliferation and potential use of weapons of mass destruction (conservatives will add much more to the list). Conservatives have opted for various fundamentalist solutions for what they see as the problems of modernity. Leftists have become increasingly fragmented after the diminution of working-class strength and the rise of identity politics. Having the freedom to express their views but no viable alternative visions, leftist academics have come to promote a nonteleological view of history and a deconstructive mode of analysis at a time when our society is dominated by linear temporality and experiencing its most teleological moment in history due to the dominance of industrial capitalism and state militarism.

It is my contention that, although history is not teleological, it does build into itself a strong cumulative developmental impetus, derived from the intrinsic natures of economic and military competition (chapter 1). When economic and/or military competition and their associated institutions dominate a society, that society will acquire a very strong drive toward cumulative development, so strong that it gives history a strong “isomorphic” outlook or a salient “teleological” momentum. This understanding of history is reflected in my analyses of Eastern Zhou China’s rationalization and drive toward cumulative development and of the impossibility of an indigenous breakthrough of industrial capitalism in China. This understanding of history has led me to conclude that, although the rise of industrial capitalism in whatever time and place (e.g., nineteenth-century England) must incur uncertainties and contingencies, industrial capitalism is in itself an *inevitable accident*. This is because humans are innately competitive, and this competitive nature will acquire a strong Lamarckian (positive-feedback) momentum when economic and/or military competition and the institutions associated with them become dominant in a society (chapter 1). Scholars correctly stress the importance of technologies, such as double-entry bookkeeping or the steam engine, to the rise of industrial capitalism, and how unforeseeable it was that these inventions would occur in a given time and place. On the other hand, similar inventions are destined to happen sooner or later in the presence of strong demands generated by keen economic competition, just as the atomic bomb was destined to be invented as the outcome of long centuries of military competition.

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